



Strengthen Mental Health Centers

SUPPORT SD.981 (KEENAN) AND HD.1867 (O'DAY)

ABH

Across the Commonwealth adults, children, and families experience unacceptable wait times to access critical behavioral health treatment.



Mental Health Centers need higher reimbursement to be able to pay adequate salaries to retain and recruit clinicians, reduce waitlists, and ensure a workforce of providers prepared to deliver quality care.



What are Mental Health Centers?

A "Mental Health Center" (MHC) is a mental health clinic licensed by the Department of Public Health (DPH) that contracts with MassHealth to provide outpatient behavioral health services. DPH and MassHealth regulations require MHCs to have a psychiatrist, therapists, a medical director, a mandatory range of therapy services, staffed after-hours coverage, and requisite operating hours. There are over 400 MHCs operating across the state.

As part of the *Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform*, the Commonwealth selected 27 MHCs to transform into Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs) to serve as regional front doors to behavioral healthcare. While 27 centers can address behavioral health crisis situations and entry to care, the hundreds of remaining MHCs are essential to meet the ongoing therapy and medication needs of residents across the state.

There are not enough providers.

More clinicians are leaving work in MHCs than can be hired. For every **10** clinicians entering work in MHCs, **13** clinicians leave.



In addition to providing critical services, MHCs contain costs, ensure a qualified behavioral healthcare workforce, and increase access by:

- **Providing preventive care.** Access to treatment in the community can prevent conditions worsening and requiring more costly services. Robust community programs can also provide individuals recovering from more acute conditions with local support allowing them to be safely discharged from more expensive levels of care.
- **Training.** MHCs serve as the primary training ground for the behavioral health workforce.
- **Accepting insurance.** Many providers in private practice do not.

This bill would require MassHealth to:

- **Implement a 5% rate increase for all outpatient behavioral health services.** This rate increase would apply to services provided in a MHC and to services provided in private practices.
- **Regularly review rates.** MassHealth would be mandated to review rates every 2 years.
- **Ensure rates to MHCs are no less than 20% higher than comparable behavioral health services delivered in private practices.** Current rates are the same for both settings and do not adjust for the cost of the additional staffing and programmatic requirements DPH and MassHealth place on MHCs.

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