



DC's Children and Families Need Access to Behavioral Health Services

Tens of thousands of children in the District struggle with behavioral health issues, but only a fraction of them receive the behavioral health services they need. Lack of access to quality behavioral health services is one of the greatest barriers to success for our kids. Meeting this critical need is essential to helping DC's children recover from trauma and insecurity exacerbated by the ongoing pandemic and successfully reengage with their schools and communities.

Funding School Based Mental Health and CBOs in the FY22 Budget for DBH is Critical

As the District plans to reopen schools in the fall, the educational success and well-being of children and families is dependent on their access to behavioral health services. Now is the time to invest in our behavioral healthcare system, including the School Based Mental Health Program (SBMH) and community-based organizations (CBOs) – both of which are funded through DBH.

We urge the Mayor and the DC Council to invest:



\$6.4 million to expand SBMH to the remaining 80+ DC public schools (traditional and charter)



\$4 million to restore funding for Community Based Behavioral Health Services (provided by CBOs) back to FY20 levels



\$1.5 million in one-time federal dollars from the American Rescue Plan to cover increased costs for SBMH providers during the pandemic and with remote learning

Additionally, we recommend that the District use one-time federal dollars to support behavioral health for students:



Fund a one-time awareness/outreach campaign to ensure DC families returning to school in the fall know about SBMH and how to connect to the program's services



Fund a pilot program to explore the benefits of providing a stipend for SBMH coordinators

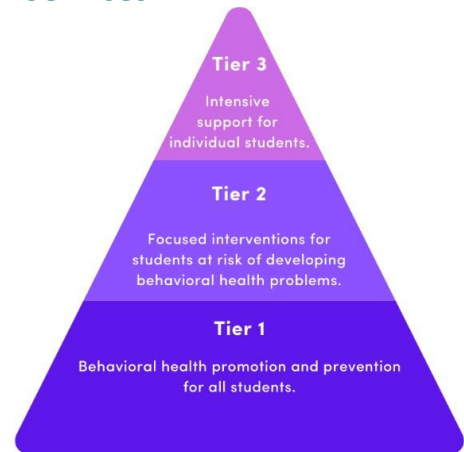


Fund a pilot program to explore options for creating family support liaisons to connect families with SBMH services

School Based Mental Health Connects Children with Critical Services

One of the easiest ways to improve access to mental health care for children is to provide services where they spend most of their time: school. SBMH takes a public health approach and partners with CBOs to hire CBO clinicians for individual schools, offering behavioral health services to children in all DC traditional and charter public schools that participate in the program. The goal of SBMH is for all DC traditional and charter public schools to provide a full array of behavioral health supports at three tiers.

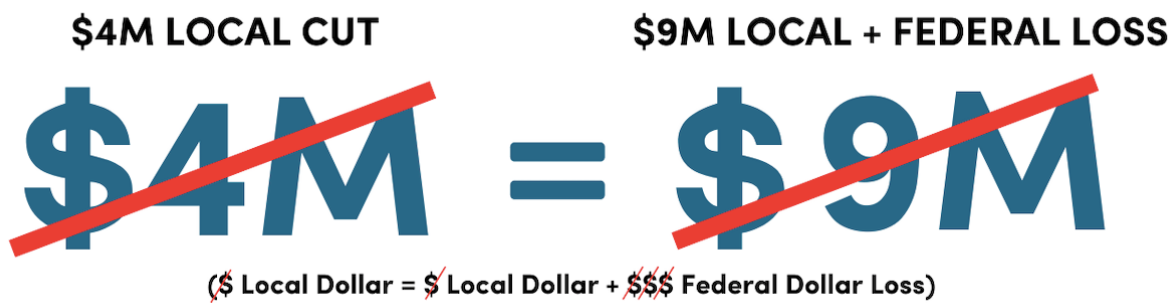
Through this interconnected system, SBMH clinicians currently provide critical behavioral health services to students in over 130 schools – regardless of whether students learn remotely or in-person.



CBOs are Key to a Successful Behavioral Healthcare System

CBOs are a critical part of DC's behavioral health care system. CBOs and other providers that accept Medicaid are the only behavioral health services accessible to low-income DC residents. Yet at a time when CBOs and the behavioral health services they provide are more essential to the well-being of DC children and families than ever, investment in our behavioral healthcare system has decreased.

The \$4 million in cuts to CBOs the Council was not able to restore in the FY21 budget has had an outsized impact due to the loss of matching federal dollars:



We Need More Spending on Behavioral Health, Not Less

If the District fails to prioritize funding behavioral health services:

- **DC children and families most vulnerable to insecurity and trauma will lose access to much-needed behavioral health services.** As we've seen during the public health emergency in particular, racial and income inequities will deepen as a result.
- **The District's already fragile behavioral healthcare system will be devastated.** We already don't have enough providers to meet the city's needs and more providers will be forced to close – making it even harder for families to access treatment and services.
- **The cost to the District of unmet behavioral health needs will multiply over time.** Meeting these needs is critical for kids to thrive in school and for parents to hold steady jobs; keep their families stable and together; and maintain safe and consistent housing.

We urge the Mayor and the Council to provide the essential funding needed to support our behavioral healthcare system and the DC children and families that depend on its services.

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