



Outpatient Mental Health Clinics

Bridge the gap in behavioral health care.

The Community Behavioral Health Association of Maryland (CBH) represents 57 community-based programs offering mental health and substance use treatment, residential services, and psychiatric rehabilitation across the state. Our members serve nearly three-quarters of the individuals using Maryland's public behavioral health system, offering a continuum of specialty supports to individuals with behavioral health needs, including community-based treatment in outpatient mental health clinics, or OMHCs.

OMHCs in Maryland

- Under current Maryland regulations OMHCs must be supervised by a psychiatrist as a medical director on site for 20 hours per week. For CBH members operating OMHCs in federally designated Health Professional Shortage Areas and state designated Medically Underserved Areas this requirement places them within one staff turnover of turning patients away and potentially closing.
- A psychiatrist medical director typically provides consultation for difficult cases and works to ensure the policies and clinical operations of an OMHC are clinically appropriate. The science behind successful uses of telehealth in behavioral health care is known, and a recent survey from the Maryland Telehealth Alliance found that overwhelmingly 66% of respondents from clinics to hospitals and other health systems are using telehealth for behavioral health.
- Currently there is only one variance in place through the Maryland Department of Health that allows this practice in a rural community. This OMHC has document an increase in client satisfaction over time. Additional variances for other OMHCs have been denied.
- The variance is tied to the psychiatrist medical director and not to the OMHC facility. When the director retire the OMHC may lose their variance from the state.

Solutions to Ensure Access

- 1** Change state regulations to improve transparency of the approval processes and tie variances to OMHC facilities and not specific staff.
- 2** Allow OMHCs to provide Psychiatrist Medical Director services through telehealth.