



FY2024 Budget Priorities

Diverse Faces, Partners in Care: Invest in the Qualified Workforce Needed for a Behavioral Health System that Enables All New Jerseyans to Thrive!

New Jersey must continue to invest in a strong, sustainable community-based system of care to meet the needs of New Jersey's diverse children, youth and adults. This may only be achieved with significant investments in the behavioral healthcare workforce that is currently experiencing a severe crisis. Many rates still do not cover the costs of providing care and certainly do not allow providers to offer competitive wages, making it nearly impossible to recruit and retain qualified staff. In addition to the welcome and appreciated new funds in the adult and children's behavioral health system in the FY2023 budget, significant further investment is needed to sustain quality care for the many lives who depend on them and to then expand capacity to increase access to care for all New Jerseyans. Toward those ends, NJAMHAA calls on the Legislature and Administration to support the following:

Invest in the Behavioral Healthcare Workforce

- Invest \$39 million in rates and contracts to close the deficit gaps resulting from inflation, soaring wages, the ever-increasing cost of health insurance and other fiscal impacts.
- Provide \$5 million for recruitment and retention bonuses for behavioral health staff.
- Add \$10 million to the Behavioral Healthcare Provider Loan Redemption Program
- Invest \$5 million in tuition reimbursement for behavioral health staff.
- Invest to erase the backlogs in program/facility and individual licensing.

Invest in an Accessible Continuum of Integrated Care

- Provide budget language to reclaim the FY2022 \$5 million Legislative increase for School Based Youth Services Programs (SBYSPs) in the School Linked Services budget line (which was not provided to SBYSPs in FY2023).
- Appropriate \$10 million as an initial investment into facility resources for behavioral health providers to further develop integrated care.
- Appropriate \$10 million for mental health providers to upgrade, implement and maintain interoperable electronic health record (EHR) systems.
- Increase funding to support full implementation of mobile crisis teams and respite services.

Legislative Priorities for Sustainability

- Pass S2792/A4223 to set Medicaid rates for primary care and mental health services equal to Medicare rates for the same services.
- Pass S2668/A508 to establish a formula for automatic upward rate and contract adjustments that are indexed to actual costs.
- Pass S136/A1456 to establish an annual cost of living adjustment based on the Consumer Price Index for certain children, youth, and family services organizations.
- Amend S3596/A4619 to include Social Work Interns in the definition of healthcare provider.
- Pass S3156 (A4621 has passed in the Assembly) and A5283 to bring accountability and standards to New Jersey's licensing Boards.
- Pass S930 (A1476 has passed in the Assembly) to reinstate the 70+ year exemption of vehicle registration fees for nonprofit organizations' vehicles that was reversed in 2017.