



# Mental Health Association in Michigan

## LETTER FROM LANSING

A monthly public policy newsletter from the  
Mental Health Association in Michigan (MHAM)

Welcome to the July 2020 edition of MHAM's monthly newsletter that provides you with public policy updates and other information that impacts the behavioral health care of you and those you love. This edition of Letter from Lansing is being provided in honor of all those men, women and children who may be indigenous; black or persons of color who struggle with brain disorders who continue to move forward despite the challenges of being members of underrepresented groups.

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

### A Note from the President & CEO

July has been known as Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month since 2008. Ms. Moore was an American author, journalist and mental health advocate who worked to bring an awareness to the challenges that underrepresented groups experience when facing a mental health condition. The mental health needs of these groups are often inadequately addressed. Our parent organization, Mental Health America, prefers to refer to this awareness as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) because it encourages a "person-first" approach and we agree with that perspective.

For more information about BIPOC and for other data that includes mental health statistics and general information, here is a link to the Mental Health America web site: <https://mhanational.org/bipoc-mental-health>

August is almost here, and we have entered the "dog days of Summer". Michigan has been experiencing a string of sweltering days for the past few weeks. The state has been working toward "reopening" the state in phases, but a resurgence of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in southeastern Michigan and in other parts of the state has slowed down the process. The pandemic continues to interfere with the ability to return to "normal" and commands the attention of our media and impacts our way of living and our well-being. Many of us are still trying to understand the impact that the pandemic is having on ourselves, our families and our communities. The answers are unclear.

And yet, COVID-19 has revealed the cracks in our healthcare systems. The disparities in healthcare are not unique to the pandemic and have existed for a long time. This time, however, the data and the statistics coming to light because of the numbers of persons who are Black, indigenous or people of color who have died from or contracted COVID-19 cannot be ignored. The long-term mental health consequences of COVID-19 are unknown.

The work for MHAM and other advocates has just begun as we reimagine a behavioral healthcare system in Michigan that is fair, equitable and that provides effective mental health services to all citizens.



## MHAM Public Policy Update

MHAM is continuing to monitor budget developments in Lansing. The pandemic's negative impact on the state of Michigan's budget for the remainder of the current fiscal year is being addressed by the Legislature and by the Governor's office. This edition of Letter from Lansing will be providing you with an update about what is happening in Lansing as policymakers work to stabilize programs for the remainder of the year despite a 2.2-billion-dollar revenue shortage.

On Wednesday, July 22, 2020, an Executive Order was outlined before the House and Senate Appropriations committees that reduces spending across multiple state departments by \$620 million dollars. According to Gongwer News Service (7/22/20), *"The overall solution to the \$2.2 billion involves the executive order and two supplemental appropriations bills. There are \$224.7 million in reductions throughout one of the supplemental bills as well as \$80.8 million in prior-work project lapses."*

In an article from Bridge Magazine (7/22/20; online: <https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-government/michigan-closing-budget-gap-layoffs-and-cuts-roads-pfas-cleanups>), the budget reductions are outlined:

*State leaders passed a deal Wednesday and Thursday to cut \$2.2 billion from the state's nearly \$60 billion budget to make up for a dramatic loss in revenue due to the coronavirus pandemic.*

*The winners: Schools and local governments, who received a boost through federal money including a one-time payment of \$500 for teachers; a net increase of \$175 per pupil and \$150 million for local governments. Most of the money for schools is for coronavirus response.*

*The losers: PFAS and lead remediation (\$4.8 million cut); implementing changes to Healthy Michigan (\$2.5 million cut); roads and bridges (\$13 million) and the state's workforce. Most of the savings came from temporary layoffs and hiring freezes.*

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, which is responsible for the Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Administration (BHDDA), has a budget reduction of \$36 million dollars. Half of the reduction is coming from layoffs and hiring freezes. If there is any "good news", it is that enhanced Medicaid payments from the federal government have eased the need for steeper reductions. It is unclear about "how" the shortage of revenue will impact the next fiscal year that begins on October 1.

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### Community Mental Health System Re-Design is "on hold"

In December of 2019, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Director Robert Gordon, unveiled a plan to redesign the community mental health system in Michigan. It appears that those plans are "on hold" due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When MHAM asked about the proposed system redesign, Governor Gretchen Whitmer responded in this way: "Given the unprecedented challenges around COVID-19, the economy, and the budget, we're pausing right now. Instead, we're focused on addressing immediate challenges: making sure people have the mental health support they need in the COVID crisis; continuing to support the outstanding network of behavioral health providers that Michigan has built over decades, and investing in

prevention, early intervention integrated physical and mental health care and the increase of accountability. We look forward to working together with people served, providers, advocates, CMHs and PHIPS and other stakeholders to continue this important work in the months to come. ”

The MDHHS—BHDDA is working on a strategic plan that has five pillars including increased accountability; integration of physical and behavioral healthcare; access to mental health treatment for all and focus on the person served. MHAM will continue to provide updates regarding the status of BHDDA’s planning efforts.

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### MDHHS Behavioral Health Strategic Planning Pillars – July 2020

- I. Drive improved outcomes and more funding to the front lines through streamlined oversight PIHP/CMHP accountability reforms.
- II. Integrate physical and behavioral health care at the point of service with a person-centered approach and inclusion of social determinates of health.
- III. Ensure all Michiganders have access to behavioral health, mental health and substance use prevention, treatment, services and follow up services for the best quality life.
- IV. Provide people with outreach, service delivery, and access to behavioral health services at their preferred locations and mechanisms. *Consider telehealth and telephone services utilized during COVID-19.*
- V. Provide quality and time efficient patient care flow from community to residential treatment or institution (hospital, juvenile detention centers, jail) to community with individualized clinical treatment.

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### Death Reporting in Psychiatric Hospitals & Units in Michigan

MHAM has been following news stories about deaths that have occurred at inpatient psychiatric hospitals or psychiatric units for the past few years. As part of its inquiry, MHAM has learned that the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) is not legally required to investigate these deaths even though psychiatric hospitals and inpatient psychiatric units are required to report the deaths. MHAM has reviewed information about 211 reported deaths that occurred at inpatient psychiatric units and hospitals between 2015 and 2019. The death reports were obtained from LARA through the Michigan Freedom of Act. MHAM will be releasing a public report of its findings next month.

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**Announcements**  
HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING!

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**MHAM Hosts FREE Webinar: Fair Trial?**

The Mental Health Association in Michigan is inviting you to a webinar to be held on Wednesday, August 5, 2020 at 10:00 AM via ZOOM so you can learn more about how to advocate for yourself or for your loved one in the community mental health system when a service is being terminated, denied or suspended. This session will feature Kyle Williams, Attorney and Litigation, Director for [Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service](#), Inc. (MPAS) who will talk about your rights to request a level one appeal and a Medicaid Fair Hearing when a Medicaid-covered service is being changed or terminated or denied. The process also pertains to the MICHoice Waiver program and to MI Health Link (Medicaid Benefits Only) in addition to the community mental health services providers (CMH) and the Pre-Paid Inpatient Health Plans (PIHPS).

Have you or your loved one/friend lost an important service or had a service denied, reduced, or terminated or suspended by a community mental health services provider?

Do you disagree with the change in your service but do not know how to let your CMH (community mental health services provider) know that you disagree with the decision?

TO REGISTER FOR THIS FREE WEBINAR, PLEASE [CLICK HERE](#).

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## FINAL THOUGHTS

Having access to mental health care is critical right now. It is important that you continue to pay attention to your mental health during the coronavirus crisis. It is normal to feel afraid and anxious, especially when faced with a situation that has many "unknowns". If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed by symptoms of anxiety,



depression, or hopelessness, please reach out for help. **If you** are experiencing emotional distress in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, [get help from:](#)

### **Michigan Stay Well Counseling via the COVID-19 Hotline**

Call 1-888-535-6136

Press "8" to talk to a Michigan Stay Well counselor.

Counselors available 24/7 - confidential and free

OR

### **National Disaster Distress Helpline**

Call: 1-800-985-5950

Text the keyword TALKWITHUS to 66746

Available 24/7

As always, if you have questions or feedback, please reach out to me at [mhuffmham@gmail.com](mailto:mhuffmham@gmail.com)

Take care of yourselves and of each other! Stay tuned for more information!

Marianne Huff, LMSW

*President & CEO*

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# One more thought...

## CHARITABLE BEQUESTS

A bequest to the Mental Health Association in Michigan through your will is a powerful expression of your commitment to improving the care and treatment of mental illness, promoting positive mental health, and preventing the onset of mental disorders. A bequest can be unrestricted or restricted, and the full amount of your gift is tax deductible. If you would like more information about making a gift through your will, please contact MHAM President & CEO, Marianne Huff at [mhuffmham@gmail.com](mailto:mhuffmham@gmail.com) or call 517.898.3907

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# MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

### Mental Health Association in Michigan

Marianne Huff, President & CEO | Oliver Cameron, M.D., Ph.D., Board Chair

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*A United Way-Supported Agency, affiliated with Mental Health America*

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