

### SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION: MENTAL HEALTH

#### Recommended Evidence-based and/or Promising Strategies

Recommendations for population-based approaches to mental health include social, economic, and environmental policy approaches.<sup>1</sup> Research has shown that public policies can impact mental health both negatively and positively.<sup>1</sup> Policies to reduce the incidence of traumatic events (i.e. promoting resilience, policies to prevent violent crime and accidental injuries, quality early childcare and education) and policies to reduce adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) (i.e. home visiting to build resilience, increase screening and treatment) are recommended to improve population mental health as literature has shown that both factors have a strong negative influence on mental health. Other recommendations include public policies to change and improve the built environment, such as increasing green space, reducing ambient light at night, and reducing ambient noise.<sup>1</sup> Research shows that exposure to green space particularly in urban areas is correlated to positive mental health.<sup>1</sup> Ambient light and noise at night can disrupt sleep which negatively impacts mental health.<sup>1</sup>

Policies to positively support those facing economic hardship can aid in improving population mental health.<sup>1</sup> Since individuals struggling with poverty are more likely to have poor mental health, policies to improve financial and housing security can help to reduce stress among low socioeconomic groups.<sup>1</sup>

Efforts that reduce structural stigma toward people with mental illness and members of other social groups are also recommended.<sup>1</sup> Particular emphasis is recommended to reform policies that have resulted in people with mental illness from being socially excluded.<sup>1</sup> These types of policies have resulted in discrimination against socially marginalized groups, impacted access to resources, promoted social isolation, and increased stress among people with mental illness.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Population-Based Approaches to Mental Health: History, Strategies, and Evidence* Jonathan Purtle, Katherine L. Nelson, Nathaniel Z. Counts, Michael Yudell *Annual Review of Public Health* 2020 41:1, 201-221

**SHIP Recommendations to Address Mental Health**

1. Improve access to behavioral and mental health services

**Evidence-based and/or Promising Strategies:**

- Reduce trauma
- Reduce ACEs
- Improve to built environment
- Policies to mitigate economic hardship
- Reduce structural stigma

**Stakeholder Input**

At the State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) Annual Meeting on October 23, 2019, SHIP stakeholders participated in the roundtable discussion related to mental health. Their feedback was generally consistent with expert recommendations and extended beyond current SHIP recommendations to improve access to behavioral and mental health services. Stakeholders emphasized the need for taking a holistic approach and utilizing strategies that address the “whole person,” including the mind and body connection and the structural and systemic factors that impact mental health.

Additionally, stakeholders accentuated the need to take an active approach so that everyone identifies as having a role to play in mental health promotion. Stakeholders stressed the need for more education and training on warning signs and symptoms of mental illness, including how to help, who to tell, and what (if any) actions to take.

**SHIP 2019-2020 Activities to Address Mental Health**

SHIP stakeholders concerned about mental health were engaged in a variety of efforts that aligned with the above recommendations during the past year. Information from the high impact stakeholder group (i.e. Behavioral Health Consortium) and other relevant stakeholders were derived from meetings, websites, and

other resources. Highlights of these activities are presented below. Given the nature of our data collection, this list should not be considered exhaustive. We welcome feedback to ensure we provide a complete picture of SHIP-related activities.

**SR** = SHIP Recommendation

**EBP** = Evidence-based strategies and/or promising practices

### Improve Access – **SR**

The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH) and its partners opened a Bridge Clinic in New Castle County in March 2019. Additional clinics were opened in Sussex and Kent counties in July and October 2019, respectively. These clinics offer new support for individuals and families impacted by the effects of mental health and substance use issues. The Bridge Clinic meets a need in Delaware to provide rapid access to qualified clinicians who can help individuals and their families understand what treatment may be needed and how to engage with the treatment system.

*Access in response to COVID-19* – To help Delawareans cope with stress and address behavioral health needs during the coronavirus pandemic, DSAMH launched the 24/7 Delaware HopeLine in May 2020. The Delaware HopeLine is a single point of contact where callers can connect to a variety of resources and information, including support from clinicians and peer specialists plus crisis assistance. It includes an opt-in text messaging program that provides ongoing mental health tips and connection points and COVID-19-related messaging related to behavioral health. The line also promotes digital resources for family help and support. A virtual outreach page, [www.HelpIsHereDE.com/Connections](http://www.HelpIsHereDE.com/Connections), was also launched to feature partner events via a Google calendar for syncing and a list of statewide social events for staying active. It features ongoing warm support lines operated by partners.

*State-led Planning for Services* – With the signing of [HB355](#) on August 6, 2020, the Advisory Council to the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH) was dissolved and re established as the Behavioral Health Planning and Advisory Council. The 17-member Council aims to improve public health issues regarding mental health and substance use in Delaware. The council will work to

advocate for adults and children with serious mental illness, children with a severe emotional disturbance, and other individuals with mental illness or emotional problems. The Behavioral Health Planning and Advisory Council will also monitor, review, and evaluate the allocation and adequacy of mental health services in the state. Such councils help states meet conditions for federal Community Mental Health Services Block Grants (CMHSBG) and facilitate system planning for federal Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant (SAPTBG) in their joint CMSBG.SAPTBG applications.

*Improving Access to Crisis Intervention* – The BHC reported in their December 2019 one-year progress report that its Access and Treatment subcommittee has work in progress to provide more crisis intervention, including mental health first-aid training to first responders and communities. This includes efforts to expand and enhance 24-hour crisis hotlines for point of entry and referral.

*Gathering Community Input* – The BHC hosted four community forums on the state's mental health and addiction services across all three counties. The purpose was to determine what Delaware's communities are seeing and experiencing, and to ask what should be done to address the issues that we are facing. Over 300 people attended at least one of four forums. [Results](#) showed key topics from community feedback included the following:

- Stigma – Exists at all levels, including providers.
- Education – Needed on mental health and substance use disorder conditions, and at all levels, including families, legislators, and providers.
- Funding – Reimbursement for integration is needed.
- Treatment – Needed especially for children. Treatment integration is also crucial.
- Resources and Services – Wrap-around service and caregiver services are needed.
- Communication – Must occur across the state within state agencies and community/not for profit/service agencies and programs.

### **Reduce Trauma - EBP**

*Promoting Resilience* – In June 2020, Trauma Matters Delaware (TMD), a statewide grassroots coalition working to make Delaware a trauma-informed state, awarded five mini-grants as part of phase I funding to support community efforts to respond to COVID-19 and to build individual and community resilience. In phase II (after the SHIP reporting period), TMD plans to award additional

mini-grants to activate community-driven mental health, wellness, and resilience initiatives that align with trauma-informed practices.

*Policies to Prevent Violent Crime and Accidental Injuries* – [House Concurrent Resolution 77](#), passed in January 2020, established the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force to study and make findings and recommendations regarding whether Delaware should become the point of contact to conduct background checks for firearms transfers. Currently, all requests for background checks for firearm sales in Delaware are conducted by the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). Per the resolution, “there are 13 states that use a state or local point of contact for all firearm background checks, including Pennsylvania and New Jersey,” and, “reports exist showing that state point of contact systems are less expensive and more efficient than FBI background checks.” Due to the public health emergency caused by COVID-19, [HB 345](#) later extended this task force’s reporting deadline to January 1, 2022.

*Quality early childcare and education* – Delaware continues its work on the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) through the collaboration of the Department of Education, DHSS, and the Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families. In December 2018, the state was awarded a \$4.2 million [Preschool Development Grant \(PDG B-5\)](#) for this work. This federal grant will allow Delaware to improve the design of our system so that all children receive high quality early learning experiences and have successful transitions prior to and into kindergarten. The grant requires Delaware to complete a comprehensive statewide birth through five [needs assessment and to subsequently develop a strategic plan](#), which has been underway in 2019-2020. The grant also requires the state to determine how data systems can be put in place to understand the population of all children and their families and make decisions on how to best meet their diverse needs. Once completed, the [Delaware Early Childhood Council](#) anticipates the adoption of recommended strategic approaches into its own Strategic Plan.

### Reduce ACES - [EBP](#)

*Home Visiting to Build Resilience* – In FY19, Delaware’s Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program reported conducting 6,882 home visits to 592 households. Delaware utilizes four evidence-based home visiting models operated by five different agencies in total.

Following the arrival of COVID-19 across the U.S., the federal [MIECHV](#) Program and a number of evidence-based home visiting service delivery model developers released guidance to encourage using telephone and/or video technology to maintain contact with families during an emergency.<sup>2</sup>

*Increase ACEs Screening and Treatment* – During this SHIP assessment period, in August 2020, Delaware submitted and received an invitation to join an interstate ACEs collaborative hosted by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. This initiative will provide Delaware with access to 10 months of technical assistance, engagement with trauma-informed mentor states, and information about innovative and evidence-based policies and practices for responding to ACEs. While Delaware is instituting ACEs screening at Federally Qualified Health Centers through the *Help Me Grow* initiative, the state is still in the early stages of looking at if and how universal ACEs screening would take place. *Help Me Grow* is a replication project utilizing physician and community outreach, centralized information and referral centers to link at-risk children and families to needed programs and services.

### **Improve built environment – EBP**

In June 2020, the Delaware Forest Service's Urban and Community Grant Program announced awards of more than \$31,000 to fund nine community tree projects in all three counties. The program offers up to \$5,000 in annual competitive matching grants for projects on public land and community open space, and grants are available to all municipalities, homeowner associations, and nonprofit organizations in the First State. Successful applications were approved by a committee of the Delaware Community Forestry Council. An interactive dashboard shows the history of the program and locations and dates of specific grant projects: <http://de.gov/treegrantdashboard>.

### **Policies to mitigate economic hardship - EBP**

*Housing assistance* – To assist Delawareans facing financial hardships because of the COVID-19 health crisis, the Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) launched the Delaware Housing Assistance Program (DE HAP) in March 2020. The program aims to provide emergency housing assistance to renters affected by shutdowns, closures, layoffs, reduced work hours, or unpaid leave due to the

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<sup>2</sup> National Alliance of Home Visiting Models. Retrieved from <https://www.nationalalliancehvmmodels.org/>

COVID-19 health crisis. Households were eligible for up to \$1,500 in assistance, with payments made directly to the property owner or utility company. In April 2020, the program halted after it was inundated with applications. When the program was relaunched in August 2020 applications must be submitted by landlords or property owners on behalf of tenants through a newly created application portal on [DSHA's website](#).

*Eviction and foreclosure moratorium* – Effective March 25, 2020, Governor Carney's sixth modification to the State of Emergency Declaration prevented landlords from evicting Delawareans from their homes during the COVID-19 crisis. Under the order, landlords also cannot charge late fees or interest and lenders may not charge interest or late fees on residential mortgage payments or initiate foreclosure proceedings during the State of Emergency. Changes to this were made by Governor Carney on July 1, 2020, when the 23<sup>rd</sup> modification to the State of Emergency lifted the moratorium on foreclosure and eviction filings but ordered that all evictions would continue to be stayed. This action permitted the Justice of the Peace Courts to determine whether the parties would benefit from a court-supervised mediation or a newly created alternative dispute resolution program.

### **Reduce structural stigma – EBP**

The BHC's [Year 1 Progress Report](#) was issued in December 2019. In it, the BHC reported that their Changing Perceptions and Stigma Committee was making progress on several outcomes. It created and implemented efforts to help people in recovery who were unemployed move toward gainful employment and help people who were employed gain access to recovery services. . It disseminated and increased awareness and continued messaging about how to assist individuals in recovery with acclimating. The committee increased awareness of [HelpsHereDE.com](#) as a key resource. "Project Purple," an awareness and stigma campaign, started statewide in October 2019, according to the report. [Delaware Goes Purple](#) is a Sussex County Health Coalition initiative. Plans are underway for a virtual campaign launch in the fall of 2020.