



NORTH SOUND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD

2021 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The North Sound Behavioral Health Advisory Board has solicited the input of persons in the North Sound region regarding behavioral health priorities to be addressed in the current legislative session. We appreciate the responsiveness of the Legislature to our input in previous years, as well as the additional investments the legislature has made in Crisis Services and Behavioral Health Facilities.

These investments have enabled the North Sound Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization [BH-ASO] to expand funding for mobile crisis outreach and new Behavioral Health Facilities. For 2021, we urge continued investment in these services as well as other critical supports to stabilize the recovery of persons with behavioral health treatment needs.

1. PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR SERVICES THAT SUPPORT THE SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION FROM CRISIS SERVICES AND INPATIENT TREATMENT.

- Provide flexible funding to support persons ready for discharge from the state hospitals or psychiatric inpatient facilities to pay for essential community-based services that would support their successful transition back to the community. These services would include additional supports for Adult Family Homes or Residential Treatment facilities, PACT or other intensive outpatient services, and transitional “step-down” facilities.
- Continue to support and expand “HARPS” housing vouchers and housing support services for low-income non-Medicaid persons and link these to new affordable housing projects providing behavioral health supportive services.

2. CONTINUE TO PROVIDE OPERATING SUPPORT FOR NORTH SOUND REGION’S NEW BEHAVIORAL HEALTH FACILITIES

- Continue to provide operating support for the new behavioral health treatment facilities that the legislature funded in previous years.
- In 2021, the North Sound region will be bringing online new Triage, Withdrawal Management, SUD Residential Treatment, and Evaluation and Treatment facilities that were funded with a combination of legislative capital and local dollars. A total of 90 beds will soon be available. The new beds will both help fill the gap that will be created by the closure of Pioneer Center North as well as respond to the growing population and increased need for mental health treatment and substance use treatment – needs that have been exacerbated by the Opioid and COVID pandemics.

- In addition to providing operating support, state funding also allows these facilities to serve low-income persons not eligible for Medicaid. Historically, these persons represented about a third of the persons served.

3. ITA HEARING COURT COSTS

- Provide a separate legislative appropriation for Involuntary Treatment Act [ITA] Court Hearing costs and related expenses: this would include clear criteria for what the courts could charge for these services. Reimbursements to courts would be limited to the level of the legislative appropriation.
- This funding comes from the same state general fund appropriation that is used to pay for crisis services, Evaluation and Treatment services, inpatient hospitalization and other treatment services for low-income non-Medicaid persons. As the costs to courts, and the ASOs, for ITA court hearings have increased there has been proportionately less money to pay for treatment services.

4. RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT “TRANSITION” SERVICES

- Expand the availability of short-term “step-down” residential treatment services to facilitate the discharge of persons from the state hospitals or psychiatric inpatient facilities for both Medicaid and low-income non-Medicaid persons.
- Persons who are ready for discharge from psychiatric inpatient facilities often need a temporary placement back on the community while longer term placement options are being explored.