



2025 Priority: Adequate County Mental Health Funding

Counties aim to ensure accessible and timely mental health treatment and services for all in the Commonwealth, without undue burden.

2025 REQUEST

Counties have identified that an increase of \$250 million in the County Mental Base line-item appropriation is still needed to restabilize the county mental health system after nearly a decade of chronic disinvestment. However, recognizing the current fiscal constraints that the commonwealth is expected to face, this number may not be feasible in one year.

Therefore, counties are seeking a **\$100 million** increase for county mental health services in the 2025-26 state budget to begin rebuilding the county mental health system, separate from other state investments, such as school-based mental health services. This investment would help counties address immediate funding gaps in mental health services to ensure that counties can continue to provide equitable programs and services to help some of our most vulnerable populations. Counties also are requesting long-term sustainable and adequate funding to ensure that they can continue to provide these critical services in the years to come.

BACKGROUND

Counties, as the providers of community-based mental health services, are facing demands that far exceed current state funding levels. Without adequate and sustainable funding, counties struggle to meet the needs of some of our most vulnerable residents. This chronic underfunding has far-reaching consequences, including strained mental health crisis care, reduced availability of services, staffing shortages, and a lack of necessary providers. The ripple effects extend beyond the mental health system, placing additional stress on hospitals, first responders, schools, and other community resources as they are forced to compensate for gaps in service availability. **This growing burden highlights the urgent need for robust and sustainable investment in county mental health services.**

WHAT ARE THE FACTS?

- Counties are at a crossroads – **the community-based mental health system continues to struggle** due to long-term disinvestment that has lagged the actual need, requiring now more than \$1 billion to fully support it.
- Wait times for services have been reported to be as long as 6 to 8 months in some counties due to underfunding, putting vulnerable residents at higher risk during a time of crisis for them – an unconscionable reality for individuals across the Commonwealth.

- Even with the recent increases of \$20 million in each of the 2023-24 and 2024-25 state budgets, few counties reported being able to do little more than keep up with their existing programming and maintain status quo.
- For instance, all counties reported that they expend a significant portion of their base funds on crisis services alone – one county in particular reported that they expend nearly 50% of their base funds on crisis services – leaving little left over to address the full scope of needed county mental health services in the community.
- **The county mental health system is currently in crisis and requires immediate action from the General Assembly and Governor to stabilize the system through a substantial and meaningful increase in the county mental health base funding.**
- With adequate investments in county mental health, counties would be able to better and more fully address specific needs such as children and older adult mental health, crisis intervention and capacity, peer supports, and other diversion services.
- Rebuilding the county mental health system won't happen overnight, but counties are committed to partnering with the General Assembly and Governor to find solutions to this problem so that individuals across all counties in Pennsylvania can access reliable and equitable mental health services now and in the future.

What could counties do with increased funding for mental health services? Counties said...

Implement more programs for justice-involved services

Increase preventive and support services for adolescents

Rebuild the infrastructure of community services and programs, such as mental health crisis walk-in centers and certified peer specialist programs

Expand supportive housing efforts

Build out enhanced crisis and emergency supports

Address staff recruitment and retention concerns