



Delaware's Behavioral Health Hospitals Need Financial Support

Delaware's behavioral health hospitals and healthcare workers are among those on the front lines actively fighting COVID-19, particularly for high-risk individuals. Like our general acute care hospitals, they are also facing significant financial loss because of the pandemic. Adequate financial support is needed to help our community manage existing mental illnesses or substance use disorders, and to ensure that behavioral health services are available as the pandemic unfolds.

Times of crisis can exacerbate underlying mental health and substance abuse issues. The COVID-19 pandemic is particularly challenging for those with behavioral health needs. Quarantine and self-isolation can intensify feelings of anxiety, depression, and can cause relapse for many in recovery.

Unfortunately, many individuals in need of care and treatment for mental health and substance use disorder are suffering in silence. They are staying at home and not seeking the help they need during this time. Some of our member behavioral health facilities have reported a **50% decline in patients** since preparations for COVID-19 began. This creates serious concerns that untreated psychiatric issues will lead to an increase of more acute crises, such as suicides or overdoses.

At the same time, these behavioral health hospitals remain operational and are continuing to provide safe, high-quality care. They are striving to maintain their staff, despite the decline in patients, to ensure they have the workforce necessary to fully meet the behavioral healthcare needs of any Delawarean in crisis.

In addition, hundreds of thousands of dollars in extraordinary expenses have been incurred by these facilities to protect against COVID-19. These expenses include the purchase of adequate supplies of personal protective equipment for staff and patients, additional training for employees, and increased frequency in cleaning and sanitization of common areas and treatment rooms. Finally, with the recent increase in unemployment, many of the patients that are seeking care during the pandemic are uninsured, adding to the financial strain experienced by these facilities.

The COVID-19 associated decline in patients coupled with extraordinary COVID-19 expenses have resulted in significant financial loss for our behavioral health facilities, **totaling more than \$85,000 per day – or more than \$2.5 million per month** (based on a survey of our three behavioral health facilities that are members of the Delaware Healthcare Association).

Unlike other businesses and healthcare providers, these behavioral health hospitals have not been eligible for much of the financial assistance options enacted by Congress.

The COVID-19 crisis is expected to increase behavioral health needs throughout the nation. Delaware's behavioral health hospitals need financial support now to continue to provide high quality behavioral healthcare for those currently in need and be ready for the challenges that lie ahead.