



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE)
Office of Behavioral Health, Disability, and Aging Policy (BHDAP)

To our partners in research and policy analysis:

I am delighted to share with you BHDAP's newsletter of our Summer 2024 work. As you will see below, in recent months our team has primarily published work focused on behavioral health, particularly substance use disorder (SUD). We released the [2023 Report to Congress](#) on the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) Demonstration Program. BHDAP researchers published a set of reports on developing and piloting a database of [SUD treatment needs](#) along with a dataset and documentation for other organizations to replicate this work. An additional set of reports evaluating the [assisted outpatient treatment \(AOT\) grant program](#) was also released. BHDAP also investigated the [impacts of COVID-19 on nursing homes](#), particularly closure rates among facilities and racial/ethnic differences in the rate of COVID-19 diagnosis and mortality among nursing home residents.

Additionally, BHDAP researchers helped plan and organize a [public workshop](#), Addressing Workforce Challenges Across the Behavioral Health Continuum of Care, held by the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine. Workshop organizers and presenters aimed to explore workforce strategies that would help improve access to and quality of mental health care services to advance health equity. Staff also presented findings from Testing Classification Methods for More Inclusive Analysis of Race/Ethnicity Data for the [HHS Equity Learning Session](#), a public-facing series by the HHS Health Disparities Council. Finally, BHDAP staff developed the [guidance](#) Federal Resources for Addressing Behavioral Health Needs of People Experiencing or at Risk of Homelessness with input from HHS partners and the US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH); it was published by USICH.

We thank you for your partnership and interest in our work!

Dr. Tisamarie Sherry, Deputy Assistant Secretary

Please share with interested colleagues and/or subscribe below to receive these and other updates from BHDAP.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics Demonstration Program: Report to Congress, 2023 *(posted August 1, 2024)*

[Read Report](#)

Per Section 223(d)(7)(A) of the Protecting Access to Medicare Act (PAMA) of 2014 (Public Law 113-93), the HHS Secretary must submit to Congress an annual report on the use of funds provided under all demonstration programs conducted under this subsection, not later than one year after the date on which the first state is selected for a demonstration program under this subsection, and annually thereafter. Each report shall include assessments of: (1) access to community-based mental health services; (2) the quality and scope of services provided by Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs); and (3) the impact of the demonstration programs on the federal and state costs of a full range of mental health services.

Developing a Database of SUD Treatment Needs *(posted August 7, 2024)*

[Landing Page](#)

This study examined the feasibility of using substance use disorder (SUD) patient intake assessment data as source of information for treatment planning. Patients are often assessed at the beginning of SUD treatment as part of the treatment planning process and to determine the most appropriate level of care (LOC), such as whether they need care in residential settings or can be safely treated in outpatient settings. This study examines whether SUD treatment needs, specialty addiction treatment services use, and gaps could be identified by linking LOC assessment data with SUD service utilization data. This report and issue brief describe the data received from four states that collected LOC assessment data and the process for linking the LOC assessment data with SUD utilization data. It also summarizes findings across the states and concludes by discussing how LOC assessment could be used to identify treatment gaps and help with treatment and workforce capacity planning. This study also produced a dataset and documentation for others to use.

Developing a Database of SUD Treatment Needs

[Read Report](#)

Piloting Substance Use Disorder Level of Care Assessment Data as a Capacity Planning Tool

[Read Brief](#)

Evaluation of the Assisted Outpatient Treatment Grant Program for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness *(posted August 8, 2024)*

[Landing Page](#)

Assisted outpatient treatment (AOT) is a civil court procedure whereby a judge orders an adult with serious mental illness to comply with community-based treatment. It was

developed as a less restrictive alternative to involuntary hospitalization. At present, AOT is authorized in nearly all U.S. states and territories, though statutory variation and uneven implementation of AOT mean that no two implementations look exactly alike. The set of reports in this evaluation include an implementation and outcome evaluation of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Assisted Outpatient Treatment Grant Program for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness using information gathered from six AOT sites.

Evaluation of the Assisted Outpatient Treatment Grant Program for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness: Outcome Evaluation Report

[Read Report](#)

Evaluation of the Assisted Outpatient Treatment Grant Program for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness: Summary Evaluation Report

[Read Report](#)

Evaluation of the Assisted Outpatient Treatment Grant Program for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness: Implementation Report

[Read Report](#)

Assessing Level of Judicial Involvement in Assisted Outpatient Treatment

[Read Brief](#)

Barriers and Opportunities for Improving Interstate Licensure Reciprocity and Portability for Behavioral Health Practitioners: Technical Expert Panel Findings

(posted August 14, 2024)

[Read Report](#)

In October 2022, ASPE convened a virtual technical expert panel (TEP) to discuss policy options that encourage interstate licensure among behavioral health providers. The goals of the TEP were to: (1) establish a foundational understanding of the existing barriers to adopting and participating in interstate licensure portability compacts and reciprocity agreements among behavioral health practitioners, professional organizations, state licensing boards, and legislators; and (2) identify federal actions that could help overcome these challenges and foster both in-person and tele-behavioral health licensure portability. Panelists also provided input on the advantages and disadvantages of multidisciplinary versus single discipline compacts, as well as the merits and limitations of national versus regional compacts.

Nursing Home Closures Did Not Increase in 2020 and 2021, Despite Financial Challenges Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic *(posted August 30, 2024)*

[Read Brief](#)

Nursing homes experienced unprecedented financial challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, raising concerns about a potential increase in nursing home closures. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in lower occupancy rates and revenue in nursing homes, raised

operating costs with new expenditures on personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, and COVID-19 tests, and exacerbated existing staffing shortages, resulting in increased costs to attract and retain workers. We conducted this study to understand the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on nursing home closures and found that closures did not increase during 2020 and 2021. There is, however, some evidence that nursing homes that were more impacted by COVID-19 were more likely to close. Nursing home characteristics associated with higher likelihood of closure included size, occupancy rate, and percentage of residents with Medicare as the primary payer. Explanations for the absence of additional closures during 2020 and 2021 include several strategies by nursing home providers to mitigate staffing shortages, including freezing admissions and closing portions of facilities, and federal and state financial assistance to nursing homes that likely prevented or delayed closure.

Racial, Ethnic, and Socioeconomic Differences in COVID-19 Diagnosis and Mortality Among Nursing Home Residents (*posted August 30, 2024*)

[Read Brief](#)

Nursing homes were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. The purpose of this study was to examine whether there were racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic differences in COVID-19 infection and mortality rates at both the nursing home resident and nursing home facility levels. The study includes national data on COVID-19 outcomes for nursing home residents through the end of June 2021. This study found that residents identifying as Black, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American had higher rates of COVID-19 diagnosis and mortality than White residents even after adjusting for risk factors such as comorbid conditions; individual level race, however, was no longer statistically significant after accounting for other nursing home and county characteristics. The study also found that facilities with a higher proportion of Black and Hispanic residents were significantly associated with greater likelihood of COVID-19 diagnosis; residents of facilities with a higher percentage of residents with Medicaid as the primary payer tended to have higher rates of COVID-19 diagnosis and mortality; and, greater county-level socioeconomic social vulnerability was associated with higher rates of COVID-19 diagnosis and mortality, although controlling for other variables of interest attenuated these relationships.

Characteristics of Pregnant and Postpartum Women with Opioid-Exposed Births and Their Children According to Type of Behavioral Health Treatment (*posted x, 2024*)

[Read Brief](#)

This study represents findings from a descriptive analysis of a linked mother-child Medicaid claims dataset to examine the characteristics of pregnant women who use medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD) or intensive behavioral health treatment; additional analysis describes the mental health and neurodevelopment outcomes of their children at one year and three years. Data from the IBM® MarketScan® Multi-State Medicaid Database from January 1, 2012, through December 31, 2019, was used to conduct the analysis. While the majority of pregnant women in this analysis access OUD treatment during pregnancy (69%), only 45% of them used MOUD prenatally, and 31% received did not receive either treatment.

Children of mothers who accessed BH treatment of MOUD during pregnancy had better perinatal outcomes and better mental and neurodevelopmental outcomes in early childhood. Timely identification and diagnosis allow children with in-utero opioid exposure to access early interventions services in order to improve their cognitive and developmental outcomes early on. Numerous federal efforts have been focused on improving access to OUD treatment among people of childbearing age in the pregnant and postpartum period.

BHDAP IN ACTION

BHDAP leadership and researchers contributed to webinars, conferences, and panel discussions, and worked with our federal partners to support cross-agency collaborations:

Finance and Delivery of Services National Workgroup

A BHDAP policy analyst served on the **Finance and Delivery of Services National Workgroup led by the American Association for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD)**. This workgroup is one of several AAIDD workgroups focused on national health equity goals. The workgroup consisted of individuals of diverse perspectives, including researchers, clinicians, policy makers, and people with lived experience of disabilities. Workgroup participants engaged in high-level discussions about the state of the research, policy, and practice, developed national goals to be achieved in 10 years, and contributed to a set of recommendations for achieving those goals. The workgroup is producing several products based on these meetings, including an issue brief, report, and book chapter, of which BHDAP is a co-author. The book chapter will summarize the literature in research, practice, and policy on financing and delivery of services for the intellectual and developmental disabilities population. The book will inform and influence learners, policymakers, grant makers, and others by describing what we know and where current gaps in knowledge.

AAIDD Annual Conference

At the [AAIDD Annual Conference](#), a BHDAP researcher **participated in a panel discussion** focused on partnerships between federal and state agencies, academic institutions, and the non-profit sector to link disparate data sources and standardize available data to enable new avenues of research regarding service use, spending, and quality outcomes for individuals with ID/DD.

Addressing Workforce Challenges

BHDAP researchers **served on the organization committee of the July public workshop [Addressing Workforce Challenges Across the Behavioral Health Continuum of Care](#)** held by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM). The workshop explored workforce needs and challenges across the continuum of behavioral health care settings. It also examined strategies to improve necessary infrastructure with the goal of improving the access and quality of mental health care services to advance health equity. Presenters and panelists covered such topics as funding streams and strategies for workforce recruitment, training, and retention, approaches to improving infrastructure for

implementing effective interventions in non-clinic settings, and methods of improving health equity through improved access to care. A report of the proceedings will be published by NASEM in the near future.

Race/Ethnicity Data Presentation

BHDAP researchers and ASPE colleagues presented *Testing Classification Methods for More Inclusive Analysis of Race/Ethnicity Data* **presentation as part of the [August HHS Equity Learning Session](#)** Statistical Policy Directive No. 15 (SPD-15): A Dynamic Overview of Policy Updates and Its Impact on HHS Activities. The HHS Equity Learning Session is presented by the HHS Health Disparities Council and broadcast live and publicly.

Behavioral Health Needs of Homelessness

With input from federal partner USICH and HHS partners SAMHSA, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the Administration for Community Living (ACL), and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), BHDAP developed **the guide [Federal Resources for Addressing Behavioral Health Needs of People Experiencing or at Risk of Homelessness](#)**. The guidance was published by USICH and provides high-level information about federal funding, technical assistance, policy and regulatory flexibilities, and other resources available to support the delivery and financing of behavioral health services for people experiencing homelessness. This guidance also provides a brief overview of evidence-based interventions for addressing the full range of mental health and substance use needs of people experiencing homelessness. Links and references to information from non-governmental organizations are provided for informational purposes and are not HHS endorsement, recommendation, or preference for the non-governmental organizations.

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Past Newsletters are available at <https://aspe.hhs.gov/bhdap-newsletters>.

WHO WE ARE: ASPE is the principal advisor to the Secretary of HHS on policy development, including major activities in policy coordination, legislative development, policy research, program evaluation, and economic analysis. Within ASPE, BHDAP focuses on policies and programs that support the independence, productivity, health and well-being of people with disabilities, people with behavioral health conditions, and older adults, including those with long-term care needs.

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