



## ABH September Committee Meetings

Wednesday, September 1  
**eHealth**, 10 a.m.

Friday, September 10  
**Children's Services**, 10 a.m.  
**Corporate Compliance**,  
10 a.m.

Monday, September 13  
**Billing**, 10 a.m.

Tuesday, September 14  
**ACCS**, 2:30 p.m.

Wednesday, September 15  
**Quality & Outcomes**,  
10 a.m.

Thursday, September 16  
**HR**, 10 a.m.  
**RSS/TSS**, 10 a.m.

Friday, September 17  
**MIDP/DUIL/SOA**, 10 a.m.

Tuesday, September 21  
**OTP**, 9:30 a.m.

Thursday, September 23  
**BH CP**, 10 a.m.

Friday, September 24  
**CBHI**, 10 a.m.

Tuesday, September 28  
**DEI&J**, 12:00 p.m.

Wednesday, September 29  
**PDT/PHP**, 1:00 p.m.

## Now Accepting Nominations for ABH's 2021 Salute to Excellence Awards!

This year, ABH members have continued to show tremendous dedication, creativity, and innovation in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, particularly those working on the front lines to ensure the Commonwealth's most vulnerable have continued to receive services. We want to hear about this work, and honor these efforts.

Do you know staff who should be recognized for their outstanding work? If your answer is YES, then you should nominate them for recognition at ABH's virtual Salute to Excellence on Friday, October 15th, 2021.

Nominating is easy! Just click [here](#) to access the online nomination form and see an example nomination submission. The deadline for nominations is **Friday, August 27th, 2021**. To be considered, nominees must be employed by an ABH member organization.

### Award Categories: Provider Recognition Award (Individuals or Groups)

Nominees show evidence of personal commitment to quality and innovation in their work performance and carry out that commitment in a manner deserving of special recognition. Examples of Provider Recognition award categories are below:

- **Excellence in Outcomes:** Integration, utilization and management of client outcomes for quality improvement
- **Excellence in Best Practices:** Planning, implementation and on-going integration of best practices
- **Excellence in Program Leadership:** Program director/staff who exemplify outstanding leadership qualities
- **Excellence in Administration and Finance:** Exceptional management of program/agency/corporate finances and/or operations
- **Excellence in Care Integration:** Promoting the integration of Mental Health, Substance Use Disorder and Primary Care to improve the health and care experience for individuals served
- **Excellence in Innovative Practice:** Planning and incorporation of creative and original behavioral health practices
- **Excellence in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice:** Integration and prioritization of diversity, equity, inclusion and justice efforts in behavioral health
- **Excellence in (\_\_\_\_\_):** The nominator may choose to create a category

# Help Us Spotlight National Recovery Month!

As you may know, National Recovery Month is a national observance held every September to educate Americans that substance use treatment and mental health services can enable those with mental and substance use disorders to live healthy and rewarding lives.

During the month of September, ABH intends to send out National Recovery Month specific Resource Roundup communications, highlighting recovery oriented events, trainings, and workshops hosted by ABH member organizations. To do this, we need your help!

If your organization is hosting an event for National Recovery Month, please contact Meg Socha at [msocha@abhmass.org](mailto:msocha@abhmass.org).

## BSAS Crisis Response Initiative

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health/ Bureau of Substance Abuse Services (BSAS) has announced a new initiative to provide on-site and virtual crisis response services to BSAS funded programs in response to traumatic events. In light of the current Opioid Overdose and COVID-19 crises, BSAS has contracted with the Institute for Health and Recovery (IHR) to provide these response services to individuals and organizations following a critical incident. Please see the BSAS IHR Crisis Response Initiative information sheet available here: [BSAS IHR Crisis Response Initiative](#).

BSAS funded organizations that wish to take advantage of this service should call IHR at 617-661-3991 and let the receptionist know that it is a crisis response call, requesting assistance.

## ABH Analysis of Final FY22 Budget

On July 29, the House and Senate finished voting to override Governor Baker's vetoes on the Fiscal Year 2022 General Appropriations Act (H4002). The spending plan came to a total of \$48.07B. The spending recommendation is based on a tax revenue estimate of \$34.35 billion for FY22, representing an increase of about \$360M, or 1.1%, over estimated FY21 year-end tax projections. The budget represents 3.5% growth, as previously agreed upon during the Consensus Revenue process in January and retains \$5.8B in the state's FY22 stabilization, aka "Rainy Day" fund. The Governor had adopted the increased revenue assumptions in their entirety and did not veto or amend any ABH priorities.

A detailed analysis of the final budget can be found [here](#). It remains substantively similar to the Conference Committee budget analysis, as there were few vetoes relating to behavioral health.

## Telehealth Payment Memo

As you may be aware, the Governor terminated the COVID-19 State of Emergency on June 15th, 2021 and with it, impacted many emergency guidelines affecting healthcare delivery and payment. In response, Hooper, Lundy & Bookman, P.C. developed [this memorandum](#) in order to inform ABH members on the impact of this changing landscape on telehealth payment. You will have to login with your ABH Members-Only Portal credentials to access the memo. The memo summarizes the regulatory parameters for telehealth reimbursement as of June 30, 2021 under Medicare, MassHealth, the Division of Insurance, and federal ERISA plans.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to Abby Kim at [akim@abhmass.org](mailto:akim@abhmass.org) with any questions or concerns.

# ABH COVID-19 Landing Page

ABH has created a COVID-19 resource page where we are collecting the guidance most relevant to ABH members:

<https://www.abhmass.org/newsroom/announcements/guidance-on-covid-19.html>

## Updated Mask Guidance

As a result of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) updated guidance, the Department of Public Health (DPH) has issued a new mask advisory, effective July 30, 2021. Fully vaccinated individuals are advised to wear a mask or face covering when indoors (and not in your own home) if you have a weakened immune system, or if you are at increased risk for severe disease because of your age or an underlying medical condition, or if someone in your household has a weakened immune system, is at increased risk for severe disease, or is an unvaccinated adult.

Please Note: Masks are still mandatory for all individuals on public and private transportation systems (including rideshares, livery, taxi, ferries, MBTA, Commuter Rail and transportation stations), in healthcare facilities and in other settings hosting vulnerable populations, such as congregate care settings.

All EOHHS COVID-19 Public Health Guidance and Directives can be found [here](#).

## Updated EOHHS Guidance

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) continues to work with providers on the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2, and appreciates the essential role residential and congregate care programs have in responding to this evolving situation.

EOHHS has issued new guidance for the following settings:

- [Updated EOHHS Residential and Congregate Care Surveillance Testing Guidance \(8.5.2021\)](#)
- [Update to COVID-19 Guidance for Day Programs \(8.4.2021\)](#)

## Working Recovery Virtual Symposium

Working Recovery will be hosting a virtual symposium exploring employment as an essential tool for recovery from substance use. This will be taking place on Tuesday, September 14, 2021 from 10:30 - 4:30 (EST).

Celebrate Labor Day and Recovery Month by joining with world renown experts, including US Secretary of Labor, Marty Walsh, to learn about topics such as:

- Answering the Why: Employment as a Critical Component of the Recovery Process
- Banding Together: Cross Systems Collaboration is Key
- Rally Employers: Now Is the Time to Advance "Recovery Ready" Workplaces
- What We Do and How We Do It: Learn About a New Approach- the ATR Model for Employment Support
- Call to Action: Next Steps to Carry Us Forward

Click [here](#) to learn more.

# Helping Patients who are Homeless or Housing Unstable / Enhanced Discharge Planning Expectations

The Baker Administration recently announced a \$30 million investment in services and strategies to [address homelessness in the Commonwealth](#). This initiative includes the release of a discharge planning toolkit for [inpatient](#) and [psychiatric](#) hospitals and [health insurance plans](#) to decrease the number of people who are discharged from healthcare facilities directly to homeless shelters. Specifically, the toolkit and related MassHealth bulletins require that providers:

- Assess individuals for their current housing situation at admission and as part of general discharge planning. For those experiencing or at risk of homelessness, discharge planning activities must commence within three working days of admission.
- Communicate and coordinate with relevant stakeholders, including family, primary care providers, behavioral health providers, Community Partners, case managers, emergency shelters, health insurance plans and state agencies from which an individual is receiving services, including DMH, DDS, or MRC.
- Offer to assist an individual in receiving benefits or services for which they may be eligible, including through DMH, DDS, or MRC.
- Reach out to the DPH Helpline for individuals with substance use disorders.
- Continuously offer training and resources to staff.
- Track and report discharge planning activities in an individual's medical record.

For individuals that are unavoidably discharged to an emergency shelter or to the street, providers must:

- Discharge during daytime hours;
- Provide individual with meal prior to discharge;
- Ensure individual is wearing weather-appropriate clothing and footwear;
- Provide individual with a copy of their health insurance information;
- Provide individual with a written copy of prescriptions and at least one week's worth of filled medications;
- Provide 24 hours advance notice to a shelter and paid transportation; and
- If a bed is not available, delay discharge until there is an available bed.

## Collaborative Statement on Baker Administration Planned Investment of \$55M in the Human Services Workforce

On July 19th, the Baker Administration [announced](#) it will invest \$55 million in the health and human services sector specifically for workforce development. This funding comes after months of discussion between the Baker Administration and *The Collaborative* -- a group of human services trade associations including the Providers' Council, the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers, the Association for Behavioral Healthcare and the Children's League of Massachusetts. The investment is part of a total \$186 million being allocated by the Baker Administration on Monday from the state's total direct aid award of \$5.3 billion that came from the federal government under the American Rescue Plan Act. Other funds will go to fiscally distre-

ssed hospitals, inpatient psychiatric acute facilities, and to train unemployed or underemployed residents.

The human services funding will enable time-limited rate enhancements from July through December 2021, helping strengthen and stabilize the state's human services workforce in response to the COVID-19. After the announcement, *The Collaborative* issued the following statement.

*"After many months of discussion with the Baker Administration regarding the workforce crisis in our sector, we were thankful to see the Governor invest \$55 million into the human services sector to help organizations recruit and retain high-quality workers to fill some of the sector's 180,000 jobs. We are excited that these funds will strengthen our sector's ability to provide essential services to the one-in-ten Massachusetts residents who rely on this sector for vital support."*

*We thank Governor Baker, EOHHS Secretary Marylou Sudders and other members of the administration for working collaboratively with our organizations for many months to find solutions to this workforce crisis. While we can – and we must – do more in the future to support dedicated workers who provide for our most vulnerable, this \$55 million is a serious help at a time when additional funding and more workers are greatly needed. We appreciate the Baker Administration's continued support of the human services sector."*

ABH is awaiting additional detail on the specifics of this investment plan.

## **Time-Limited Federal Home and Community-Based Services Rate Increases**

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have determined certain services, including select behavioral health services such as Children's Behavioral Health Initiative and Adult Community Clinical Services services, have been determined eligible by for federal American Rescue Plan Act-funded, time-limited rate increases under the state's Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver. EOHHS published emergency [regulations](#) on July 19th. The increases must be used to promote workforce development and strengthen the HCBS workforce during the continued federal public health emergency. Guidance on allowable use for MassHealth providers is available [here](#). Determination of other potentially eligible behavioral health services is pending.

## **Collaborative Statement on Updated BLS Benchmarks**

On July 27th, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services [announced](#) investment of approximately \$51.3M in human services rates. The rate increases reflect the incorporation of the most current Bureau of Labor Statistics benchmarks for key human service position occupational codes for rates that had become effective July 1, 2021. This funding comes after discussion between the Baker Administration and *The Collaborative* -- a group of human services trade associations including the Association for Behavioral Healthcare, the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers, the Children's League of Massachusetts and the Providers' Council. After the announcement, *The Collaborative* issued this statement:

*"Human service providers are keenly aware of the ongoing recruitment and retention struggles threatening the viability of their programs. The recent announcement proposing enhanced human service reimbursements through updated salary benchmarks exemplifies the Baker Administration's continued commitment to addressing the workforce crisis in our sector. This investment would enable rate payments that more accurately reflect the high-quality and indispensable care currently provided to millions of Massachusetts residents."*

*COVID-19 has exacerbated both the need for services and the difficulties providers face in filling positions. We applaud Governor Baker, EOHHS Secretary Marylou Sudders, and other members of the administration for their tireless efforts and collaboration with the Association for Behavioral Healthcare (ABH), the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers (ADDP), the Providers' Council and the Children's League of Massachusetts to ensure the stability of the human services sector. We look forward to these funds supporting a robust and competitive workforce that can deliver urgently needed healthcare."*

## ABH STAFF

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# MassHire Virtual Job Fair: August 16 - 20

As you may be aware, the Baker-Polito Administration is preparing to host the largest virtual job fair in state history this month to assist 330,000 out-of-work residents slated to lose federal enhanced unemployment benefits when they expire the week of September 4th.

The MassHire Department of Career Services (MDCS) and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development have reached out to ABH to ensure that member organizations are aware of the virtual job fair details. The virtual job fair will be held on Monday, August 16th through Friday, August 20th from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. each day. This event will consist of two general job fairs and three industry-specific job fairs. Healthcare will be featured on Wednesday, August 18th. Employers may attend as many days as they choose to meet their hiring needs.

## Overview

This will be the largest virtual job fair in state history, intended to act as a buffer against the impending loss of unemployment benefits for 330,000 out-of-work residents.

## How To Join

This event is free to all companies. You can find a flyer with information about the job fair and employer registration link [here](#). The MassHire system is doing large scale outreach to jobseekers as well as employers.

## Questions?

The [flyer](#) also includes contact information for the local MassHire career centers to answer any questions that you may have about this event. We hope you find this event to be a helpful resource in recruiting talent.

## Interesting Reads

- [In Mental Health Crises, a 911 Call Now Brings a Mixed Team of Helpers — And Maybe No Cops.](#) *Kaiser Health News.*
- [A Family Wellness Check: California Invests in Treating Parents and Children Together.](#) *Kaiser Health News.*
- [Study paints stark picture of how some get mired in collections because they can't pay medical bills.](#) *Washington Post.*
- [Drug overdose deaths in 2020 hit highest number ever recorded, CDC data shows.](#) *CNN.*