

February 2024



ASSOCIATION
FOR BEHAVIORAL
HEALTHCARE



We hope this message finds you well. As we embark on a new edition of our eUpdate, we're thrilled to welcome you to another round of engaging content and updates that matter. Thank you for being part of our community. Your feedback and suggestions are invaluable to us. Feel free to reach out and let us know what topics you'd like us to cover or if there's anything specific you'd like to see in future editions.

This Month's eUpdate

Every month, ABH compiles important information and resources to keep you updated and informed. Here is a glimpse of what you can expect in this month's eUpdate:

- [Black History Month](#)
- [ABH Analysis of the Governor's FY25 Budget](#)
- [February 15, 2024: Deadline for Seasonal Influenza Vaccination and COVID-19 Vaccination Reporting for Clinics](#)
- [MassHealth Managed Care Entity Bulletin 108](#)
- [HHS Issues Final Rule on Integrated Care and Confidentiality for Individuals with SUD](#)
- [ABH 2023 Salary Survey Report](#)
- [BCBSMA Foundation Announces Call for Proposals for Special Initiatives Grant Program](#)
- [March 2024 Committee Schedule](#)

- [MassHealth Mental Health Center Request for Information](#)
 - [Temporarily Suspended - Human Services Workforce Loan Repay Program](#)
 - [Former First Lady Michelle Obama to Speak at NatCon24!](#)
 - [Interesting Reads](#)
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Black History Month

February is Black History Month! The national theme for 2024 is African Americans and the Arts: "In the fields of visual and performing arts, literature, fashion, folklore, language, film, music, architecture, culinary and other forms of cultural expression the African American influence has been paramount. African American artists have used art to preserve history and community memory as well as for empowerment." ([ASALH](#)). ABH commemorates Black behavioral healthcare and human services professionals who embody empowerment, and we celebrate how behavioral health treatment providers and the people we serve benefit from a diverse professional community.

This year, we are lifting up the work of Dr. Solomon Carter Fuller, the first Black US Psychiatrist who was a researcher and neuropsychiatrist. Born in Liberia, Dr. Fuller spent most of his career in Massachusetts, receiving his medical degree from Boston University and serving an internship at Westborough State Hospital. The Massachusetts legislature established the Solomon Carter Fuller Mental Health Center in his name 1974 to provide outpatient treatment and carry out research and education.

In 1904, Fuller was one of five foreign research assistants selected by Alois Alzheimer to work in his laboratory at the Royal Psychiatric Hospital in Munich...Ultimately, the results of Fuller's research helped to confirm that the condition known as Alzheimer's was...a physical disease of the brain ([Washington Post](#)).

Later in his career, he recruited and trained Black psychiatrists at the Tuskegee Veterans Hospital. He also trained medical staff to diagnose the side effects of syphilis to prevent Black veterans from being deemed ineligible from military benefits, serving as an important leader against the systemic racism and oppression of Black service members.

Unfortunately, Solomon Carter Fuller's career was impacted by the brutality of racism, as he explained, *"With the sort of work that I have done, I might have gone farther and reached a higher plane had it not been for the color of my skin."*

As we reflect on the contributions of Dr. Fuller, we encourage you to celebrate Black History Month, and have compiled some resources that may help you do so:

- [Recognizing African-American contributions to neurology: The role of Solomon Carter Fuller \(1872-1953\) in Alzheimer's disease research](#)
- US Department of Health and Human Services: [Celebrate Black History Month 2024](#).
- [Advancing Better Health Through Better Understanding for Black and African American Communities: Health and Literacy Health Care Access, and Culturally Appropriate Care 2024 Reading List](#)
- [Association for the Study of African American Life and History \(ASALH\) Black History Month Virtual Festival](#) - This year's festival will celebrate the theme of African Americans and the Arts in the past, present and FUTURE, starting February 1, 2024.
- [Black History Month](#)

ABH Analysis of the Governor's FY25 Budget



The Healey-Driscoll Administration has filed its [Fiscal Year 2025 \(FY25\) budget recommendation](#), also referred to as House 2 (H.2). The Governor's FY25 budget proposal totals \$56.15 billion, an increase of \$1.59 billion, or 2.9 percent, over the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) General Appropriations Act (GAA), excluding spending tied to the income surtax and Medical Assistance Trust Fund.

The FY25 H.2 proposed budget includes the following highlights:

Department of Mental Health (DMH)

- DMH is funded at \$1.24 billion, a \$105.4 million increase over the FY24 final budget.
 - The Adult Community Services line item (5046-0000) is funded at \$622.2 million, a \$25.6 million increase over the FY24 final budget.
 - The Children's Services line item (5042-5000) is funded at 130.5 million, a \$9.9 million increase over the FY24 final budget.

Department of Public Health (DPH)/Bureau of Substance Addiction Services

- The overall DPH budget is funded at \$967.3 million, a \$1.3 million decrease from the FY24 final budget. Note that H.2 excludes all legislative earmarks, taking that into account, DPH is funded at a \$31.9 million increase over FY24 levels.
- The Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS) line item (4512-0200) is funded at \$193.1 million, a \$23.5 million decrease from FY24. It is ABH's understanding that the elimination of legislative earmarks largely accounts for the decrease.

MassHealth

- MassHealth is funded at \$20.3 billion gross/\$8.2 billion net, an increase of \$730 million gross/\$440 million net above revised FY24 spending. The Healey-Driscoll Administration cautions that MassHealth faces "significant fiscal headwinds in FY25, as federal revenues decline from pandemic-era highs and health care costs continue to grow."
- Administration officials stated that MassHealth will continue to raise rates for outpatient behavioral health and support further investment in addressing children's urgent needs (e.g., CBHI).
- Included among MassHealth priorities was to "strengthen outpatient access to (1) primary care (2) urgent mental health care, focusing on children, (3) addiction support services."

To read ABH's complete analysis, click [here](#).

February 15, 2024: Deadline for Seasonal Influenza Vaccination and COVID-19 Vaccination Reporting for Clinics

The Department of Public Health's [clinic licensure regulations](#) require licensed clinics to ensure all health care personnel are vaccinated annually with seasonal influenza vaccine and are up to date with vaccine doses for COVID-19 as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) unless an individual is exempt from vaccination.

The Department released this [memorandum](#) to inform Massachusetts clinics of the steps needed to fulfill the requirement to vaccinate healthcare personnel for influenza and COVID-19 and to submit these data.

MassHealth Managed Care Entity Bulletin 108: Updates to Minimum Rates for Mental Health Centers and to Provider Billing Rules for GJ Modifier

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) has published [*Managed Care Entity Bulletin 108: Updates to Minimum Rates for Mental Health Centers and to Provider Billing Rules for GJ Modifier*](#).

Effective March 1, 2024, MassHealth will update the minimum rates that Managed Care Entities are required to pay for certain services provided by mental health centers (Provider Type 26 and who meet criteria set forth in 130 CMR 429, or as otherwise defined by EOHHS). This rate increase will be applicable for Accountable Care Partnership Plans, MCOs, and MBHP.

CMHCs are the bedrock of the community behavioral health system, and we are pleased with this initial investment by MassHealth. While there is much more work to be done, we are grateful for MassHealth's initial response to our concerns.

HHS Issues Final Rule on Integrated Care and Confidentiality for Individuals with SUD

HHS has released its [final rule](#) regarding modifications to the Confidentiality of Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Patient Records regulations at 42 CFR Part 2 (commonly called "Part 2"). In accordance with the bipartisan CARES Act of 2020, the final rule helps to bring Part 2 into alignment with HIPAA. The National Council submitted comment on this proposal last year.

Specifically, the final rule:

- Permits use and disclosure of Part 2 records from a single patient consent for all future uses and disclosures for treatment, payment, and health care operations.
- Aligns Part 2 patient notice requirements with requirements under HIPAA.
- Permits redisclosure of Part 2 records by HIPAA covered entities and business associates in accordance with HIPAA, with certain exceptions.
- Establishes HHS enforcement authority, inclusive of penalties for Part 2 violations, and outlines breach notification requirements.

The rule is scheduled to be published in the Federal Register on February 16, 2024 with an effective date 60 days after its publication and a compliance date of February 16, 2026. You can read more at [HHS' final rule fact sheet](#).

ABH 2023 Salary Survey Report

The Association for Behavioral Healthcare (ABH), in partnership with Gallagher Surveys, developed a salary and benefits survey that focused specifically on mental health and substance use disorder providers. The final product included extensive input and guidance from the ABH Human Resources Committee, the ABH Human Resources Salary Survey Subcommittee, and the ABH Senior Leadership Committee on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice. Thank you to the committee members who worked to develop and refine the survey and to the staff who developed and reported data that made this survey possible.

The results are now in and available for purchase. We anticipate that these results will be a great resource for members.

Survey Cost

As with past surveys, a significant discount will be given to ABH members who participated in the salary survey. The cost to purchase the survey is as follows:

- \$400 for ABH members who participated in the survey
- \$1400 for ABH members who did not participate, but who wish to purchase the survey

This survey is not available to non-members.

Purchasing Information

To purchase the Salary Survey results:

1. Please complete this [Salary Survey Purchasing Request Online Form](#). You will need to use your ABH Members-Only Portal Login credentials to access this form. If you do not have your credentials or need them for the first time, please contact Meg Socha at msocha@abhmass.org.
2. We are also requiring members to review and sign this [ABH Salary Survey Nondisclosure Agreement and Agreement to Pay](#). You may either upload it via the [Salary Survey Purchasing Request Online Form](#) or return it via email to Meg Socha at msocha@abhmass.org. You can expect the 2023 Salary Survey Report within 2 business days after we receive a signed agreement. The Report will be provided via email to the organizational CEO.

Important Note about Demographic Data

In consultation with the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice Senior Leadership Committee, this year's salary survey again asked for staff demographic data. The final report includes baseline demographic data. Please note that the salary data is not tied to the demographics. These data are included for informational purposes only.

Questions?

If you have any questions, please contact Meg Socha at msocha@abhmass.org.

BCBSMA Foundation Announces Call for Proposals for Special Initiatives Grant Program

The [Special Initiatives grant program](#) provides organizations with a one-time grant of up to \$50,000 to pilot or launch a new project over a one-year period. This grant is intended to fund projects that empower communities to advance health equity. Projects should positively impact the health or health care related needs of those Massachusetts residents who have been economically, socially, culturally, or racially marginalized. The goal of this grant program is to help these projects be sustained, scaled, and potentially replicated.

Special Initiatives grant proposals must align with one or more of the Foundation's three focus areas: access to health coverage and care, access to behavioral health services, and elimination of structural racism and racial inequities in health.

Proposals are due on Monday, February 26, 2024 at 12:00 P.M.

Please visit their [website](#) for details about how to apply.

Jacque Anderson, Senior Director of Grantmaking, has set aside virtual office hours for anyone interested in having a conversation about their proposal ideas. Please select a time that is convenient for you below.

Virtual Office Hours

March 2024 Committee Schedule

Friday, March 8

Children's Services, 10 a.m.

Corporate Compliance, 10 a.m.

Monday, March 11

Billing, 10 a.m.

Tuesday, March 12

ACCS Services, 4:00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 19

OTP, 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday, March 20

Quality and Outcomes, 11:30 a.m.

Thursday, March 21

RRS/TSS, 10:00 a.m.

Friday, March 22

CBHI, 12:00 p.m.

MIDP/DUIL/SOA, 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, March 27

PDT PHP, 1:00 p.m.

ABH's Committees are the "grassroots" of our organization. To learn more about ABH's Committees, [click here](#).

MassHealth Mental Health Center Request for Information

MassHealth released a [Mental Health Center Policy and Payment Reform Request For Information \(RFI\)](#) that was due on January 31, 2024. ABH is extremely pleased that MassHealth is engaging with stakeholders on the future of mental health centers as we know that mental health centers bring tremendous value to the Commonwealth as important points of access for individuals with public and private health coverage as well as serving as the engine for the behavioral health workforce.

Thank you for all of your feedback and engagement around the MassHealth MHC RFI Response! ABH's RFI response is available [here](#).

We truly appreciate all of the thoughts, discussions, and ideas shared over the last several weeks! Thank you for the weekly engagement from Executives around Policies and Payments, discussions around administrative challenges, outcomes, clinical work, insights, and the value of MHCs from CMOs, Quality and Outcomes, and Outpatient Committees. Your feedback and efforts have been invaluable!

Temporarily Suspended - Human Services Workforce Loan Repay Program

MA Repay: Human Service and Home Health Worker Loan Repayment Program originally launched on Monday January 29, 2024 with applications being accepted until 11:59 PM EST on

February 26, 2024 OR until the award amounts requested by applicants reaches approximately twice the available award funding for this program as determined by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), whichever comes first.

However, at this time registration to begin a new application for the MA Repay: Human Service and Home Health Worker Student Loan Repayment Program is **temporarily paused**. The Executive Office of Health and Human Services is pausing new registrations in order to update certain program elements. Once the changes have been made, the updates will be shared and the application will be re-opened.

Please note, if you have already submitted your application, you will not need to resubmit your application upon registration reopening.

If you have already successfully registered (and received a unique application link) but have not started or finished your application, you may complete and submit your application.

For more information, please visit [MA Repay](#).

Previously Communicated

The MA-Repay Program requires a 1-, 2-, or 3-year service commitment and awards range from up to \$6,000 to \$30,000 depending on level of education and full-time or part-time hours. Applicants must work in eligible settings of programs that provide treatment, support, or services to clients or their families and are operated by a home-based or community-based human service organization located in Massachusetts. The setting must be funded or licensed by one of the following state agencies in order to be eligible.

- MassHealth
- Executive Office of Elder Affairs
- Department of Public Health
- Department of Mental Health
- Department of Developmental Services
- Department of Youth Services
- Department of Children and Families
- Department of Transitional Assistance
- Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
- Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- Massachusetts Commission for the Blind
- Executive Office of Veterans Services
- Office for Refugee and Immigrants
- Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities; and
- Department of Early Education and Care

Eligible professionals include *but are not limited to*:

Certified Nursing Assistants, Homemakers, Family Partners, Educators and Educator Assistants, Home Health Aides, Developmental Specialists, Personal Care Attendants/Aides, Case Managers, Companions, and Licensed Clinicians.

- [MA-Repay Human Services Workforce Program Fact Sheet](#)
- [MA-Repay Human Services Workforce Program Flyer](#)

All questions should be directed to the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers at [Contact \(marepay.org\)](mailto:Contact@marepay.org)

Former First Lady Michelle Obama to Speak at NatCon24!



The National Council for Mental Wellbeing has announced that former First Lady [Michelle Obama](#) will join for a keynote conversation at NatCon24!

At NatCon24, the largest conference in mental health and substance use, [powerful voices](#) are being brought to the forefront to educate, inspire and offer new perspectives.

Join us at NatCon24 - the largest conference in mental health and substance use treatment – which will be held from **April 15-17 in St. Louis, Missouri**.

More than an event, NatCon24 is an invitation to further invest in yourself and your organization, while learning alongside 5,000+ health care colleagues from across the country. Here's a glimpse of what you can expect:

- Engage with thousands of colleagues from across the country.
- Hear from hundreds of thought leaders in health care and beyond.
- Participate in dozens of diverse, immersive and peer-led workshops.
- Access hundreds of hours of premium content on trending topics.
- Earn continuing education (CE) and continuing medical education (CME) credits.
- Discover new technologies and tools to increase your impact.
- Contribute to conversations about the future of our field.

Additional information can be found on the NatCon24 overview page [here](#). We encourage you to share this opportunity with your staff, so they can join us in [St. Louis](#) for three days of nonstop learning, networking and entertainment.

[Click here to register](#), and get ready to explore the future of our field, build new relationships, fulfill your licensing requirements and learn from the best minds in health care – only at NatCon24!

Interesting Reads

- [Narcan is now available to every school in Vermont](#). *WBUR CommonHealth*.
- [With opioid deaths soaring, Biden administration will widen access to methadone](#). *NPR*.
- [988-Hotline Counselors Air Concerns: More Training Needed to Juggle a Mix of Calls](#). *Kaiser Health News*.
- [Rising Suicide Rate Among Hispanics Worries Community Leaders](#). *Kaiser Health News*.

[ABH Staff](#)

[Click here](#) to learn more about ABH staff, and to access and download a staff directory.

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