



SB 453 – Behavioral Health Administration – Children with Mental Disorders – List of Available Services

Committee: Finance

Date: February 18, 2020

POSITION: Support with Amendments

The Maryland Coalition of Families: Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) helps families who care for someone with behavioral health needs. Using personal experience as parents, caregivers and other loved ones, our staff provide one-to-one peer support and navigation services to parents and caregivers of young people with mental health issues and to any loved one who cares for someone with a substance use or gambling issue.

MCF strongly supports HB 374.

In our work providing navigation services to parents and caregivers of children with mental health needs, it is commonplace that families don't know what services might be available to their child and family. This is one of the things that we do – help families to identify resources and services and access them. Our locally-based staff know what programs exist in their jurisdictions for specific populations of children, and help connect families to services. Not all families find their way to us, however, and sometimes even our staff are surprised to learn that there was an available service that they had no knowledge of.

For this reason HB 374 is critically important. Families desperately need complete information about available children's mental health services brought together in one place that is easily accessible. Without this, families remain uninformed and children go without needed services.

Such a list does not currently exist. There is a 2-1-1 online directory that lists certain behavioral health providers, but it is not searchable by age range and does not include many of the programs and services that are available for children.

MCF supports the amendments proposed by NCADD:

1. The list should be available as an online searchable directory
2. Substance use services should be included along with mental health services
3. The Behavioral Health Administration should keep the list constantly updated, with information about what insurances the programs accept (public and private)

It is important that the list be kept in such a way as to be searchable by service, with the providers listed for each service. Service categories may be psychiatric rehabilitation services, therapeutic services, and care coordination services, as are written in the bill. It should be noted, however, that there are other services available to children and families, including services available through the 1915(i) Medicaid State Plan Amendment, residential treatment centers, and respite services. It would be helpful if the Behavioral Health Administration included these services in any list they develop.

We urge a favorable report on SB 453 with amendments.

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