

MD Bed Registry and Referral Advisory Committee Meeting
Meeting Minutes
April 21, 2026, 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Members Present

- Dr. Rachel Talley, Maryland Department of Health - Behavioral Health Administration
- Heather Bagnall, Maryland General Assembly - House Health Committee Chair
- Tanya Schwartz, Behavioral Health Administration
- Dr. Meg Sullivan, Maryland Department of Health - Public Health Services
- Sonia Chessen, Maryland Department of Health - Office of the Secretary
- Jon Kromm, Health Services Cost Review Commission
- Crista Taylor, Behavioral Health System Baltimore
- Carla Thorpe, Kent County Health Department / MACHO
- Shannon Hall, Community Behavioral Health Association of Maryland
- Marshall Henson, Sheppard Pratt
- Cara Reynolds, LifeBridge Health
- Dan Martin, Mental Health Association of Maryland
- Renee Averitt-Sanzone, The Parents' Place of MD

Members Absent

- Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Maryland General Assembly - Speaker of the House
- Karen Duffy, Maryland Coalition of Families
- Michelle Livshin, On Our Own of Maryland, Inc
- Jennifer Moore, Maryland Health Information Management Systems Society

I. Opening and Introductions

The first meeting of the Maryland Bed Registry and Referral Advisory Committee was opened by Dr. Rachel Talley, Acting Deputy Secretary of the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA). Chairwoman Heather Bagnall provided opening remarks and Tanya Schwartz, Director for Urgent and Acute Care at BHA, led a round of introductions for the Committee members representing various state agencies, provider groups, and consumer organizations.

II. Presentation and Discussion: MD Behavioral Health Connect: Streamlining Access to Care

Tanya Schwartz, Director for Urgent and Acute Care at BHA, provided an overview of Maryland Behavioral Health Connect, a new web-based bed registry and referral system mandated by HB 1121 that is under development. This platform will replace fragmented, manual processes with automated, electronic care coordination to improve behavioral health outcomes. The platform, being developed in partnership with vendor Bamboo Health, includes four key elements:

- Searchable resource directory of licensed mental health and substance use disorder services
- Automated bed availability;
- Electronic and closed-loop referral capabilities for providers; and

- A crisis response platform to coordinate care across 988 centers and mobile crisis services.

Discussion on defining success of Maryland Behavioral Health Connect centered on achieving widespread system adoption, ensuring platform interoperability with provider Electronic Medical Records, the importance of insurance coverage for care access, and measuring improvements through metrics such as baselining and tracking speed to service, reducing emergency department boarding times, and assessing long-term patient outcomes. Advisory Committee members also expressed interest in viewing the platform.

III. MD Behavioral Health Connect Public Comment

No Public Comments were received.

IV. Adjournment

Dr. Talley adjourned the meeting at 1:52pm