

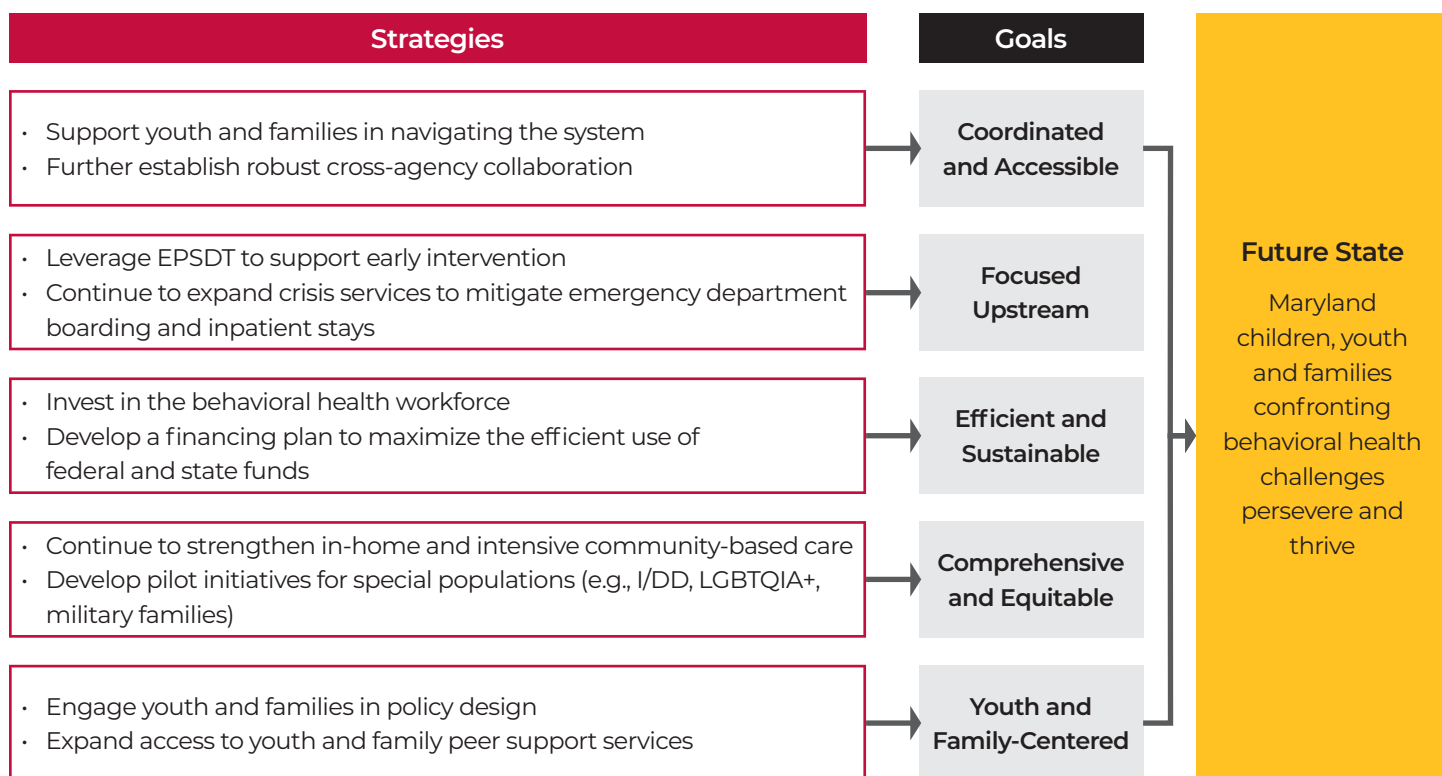
# Roadmap to Strengthen Maryland's Public Behavioral Health System for Children, Youth and Families

JUNE 2025

## Executive Summary

The Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) partnered with the Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) and Manatt Health to develop a Roadmap for strengthening the public behavioral health system (PBHS) to better meet the needs of Maryland children, youth, and families; prioritize equity; and with a focus on strengthening the access to quality and equitable home and community-based care. Building upon work already underway, the Roadmap sets forth a vision for the PBHS, as well as goals and specific strategies to achieve this vision (the Roadmap).

The Roadmap was developed in response to the urgent need for further reform. Data from recent years indicates that thirty percent of Maryland middle and high school students report feeling sad or hopeless, the state is losing more than 100 young people a year to drug and alcohol overdoses, behavioral health patients board in emergency departments at a median time of 33.7 hours, and suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people ages 10 to 24.<sup>1</sup> The Roadmap puts forward five key goals and ten specific strategies to enhance the PBHS and better meet the behavioral health needs of Maryland children, youth, and families.



The Roadmap recognizes that BHA cannot achieve sweeping improvements in isolation or overnight— to drive forward meaningful change, it will require continued, coordinated effort by BHA, other state agencies, and community partners, as well as ongoing engagement with youth and families impacted by the PBHS. In addition to committed partners, BHA will need an implementation approach that prioritizes the most urgent, impactful, and feasible changes and a financing strategy to ensure proposed changes can be implemented and sustained using a combination of local, state, and federal funds.

**This Roadmap is intended to serve as a guide as BHA continues striving towards a youth- and family-centered, accessible, equitable and sustainable PBHS for Maryland children, youth and families.**

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*“Our first emergency department visit was positive—the doctor really helped her figure out her options and decide between inpatient and community-based care. I just wish there was more consistency and that my kid and I were always treated with respect.”*

Focus Group Participant



## Endnotes

- 1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. National Vital Statistics System, Provisional Mortality on CDC WONDER Online Database. Data are from the final Multiple Cause of Death Files, 2018-2022, and from provisional data for years 2023-2024, as compiled from data provided by the 57 vital statistics jurisdictions through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/mcd-icd10-provisional.html> on Nov 17, 2024; Behavioral Health Emergency Department Wait Times and Service Improvements in Maryland. General Assembly of Maryland Department of Legislative Services. (2022, January). [https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MDH/HSCRC/HB1121,2020Ch29\(2021\)\\_2022.pdf](https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/MDH/HSCRC/HB1121,2020Ch29(2021)_2022.pdf); Maryland Department of Health releases new Maryland Action Plan to prevent suicide in schools. Maryland Department of Health Newsroom. (2024, September 4). <https://health.maryland.gov/newsroom/Pages/Maryland-Department-of-Health-releases-new-Maryland-Action-Plan-to-prevent-suicide-in-schools.aspx#:~:text=Suicide%20is%20the%20third%20leading,of%20death%20for%20all%20ages>.

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## About Manatt Health

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## About Maryland Coalition of Families

Maryland Coalition of Families is a statewide non-profit, based in Columbia Maryland, that offers Family Peer Support services, at no cost, to families, caregivers, and/or loved ones of individuals experiencing behavioral health challenges. For more information, visit [mdcoalition.org](http://mdcoalition.org).

## About Maryland Department of Health Behavioral Health Administration

The Behavioral Health Administration, as part of the Maryland Department of Health, oversees community behavioral health services to help Marylanders with mental health, substance use, and more. For more information, visit [health.maryland.gov/youthbehavioralhealth](http://health.maryland.gov/youthbehavioralhealth).