

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Department of Mental Health**



Council of the District of Columbia Committee on Health
FY 2013 Budget Hearing
David A. Catania, Chair

Testimony of
Stephen T. Baron
Director
Department of Mental Health
April 26, 2012

Good morning, Chair Catania, Members of the Council and Committee Staff.

I am Steve Baron, Director of the Department of Mental Health, and I am here to present the Department's Fiscal Year 2013 budget request. With me are Michael Neff, Chief Administrative Officer, Anthony Young, Director of Fiscal Services, and Joyce Jeter, Agency Fiscal Officer.

The proposed budget for the Department of Mental Health reflects Mayor Gray's commitment to funding needed services and supports for District residents with mental illnesses. My budget team and I participated in the Mayor's budget development process and I offer this testimony in full support of Mayor Gray's proposed budget for the Department. Mayor Gray's FY 2013 overall budget ensures that all District residents are able to receive enhanced services and participates in the city's progress. While many other cities are shrinking, the District of Columbia continues to grow and thrive. We are pleased to be part of this progress.

The Department's proposed FY 13 budget is \$190 million dollars (190,168,000) which includes a \$9.3 million increase in local funds over this fiscal year. In addition, the Mayor is proposing \$5 million in the capital budget to support the renovation of 100 new housing units for people with mental illness.

Briefly, the Department of Mental Health is responsible for developing and overseeing a comprehensive, community based, high quality mental health system. Our goal is to ensure that eligible District residents of all ages have easy access to mental health services—from resolving an acute psychiatric crisis to ongoing treatment and support—when these services are needed. It's our job to eliminate barriers to care such, to provide treatment that respects diverse cultures and backgrounds, and to create ways for individuals to participate in their own treatment planning. In addition, we are responsible for monitoring and auditing mental health providers to ensure compliance with required standards of care and federal and local laws.

The proposed FY 13 budget funds a range of outpatient mental health services as well as Saint Elizabeths Hospital, the District's public inpatient psychiatric facility.

Let me offer a few highlights. The proposed budget allows the Department to continue to:

- Deliver a range of mental health services to 20,000 people, including over 4,000 youth, primarily through community based mental health providers located throughout the District
- Provide a robust range of emergency psychiatric services to about approximately 3,000 individuals a year. This includes services offered at the emergency care facility known as CPEP and through the mobile crisis teams for adults and children. Mobile crisis services are offered to the individual in their home, school or community
- Continue the extremely important same day or walk in services through the Department's outpatient adult clinic at 35 K St. NE which also operates a pharmacy that provides psychiatric medications for uninsured individuals
- Maintain the 24hr/7day a week Access Help line for suicide prevention counseling and to assist in enrolling individuals in the District's public mental health system
- Provide a range of housing including rent subsidies, independent living supportive services or 24/7 residential facilities to around 1,700 individuals with serious and persistent mental illness
- Provide early childhood prevention and intervention services in targeted day care centers and elementary schools, and
- Continues our highly valuable school-based mental health program that provides screening, referrals and treatment for hundreds of students in 53 public schools, including public charter schools.

In addition, the budget maintains funding for important initiatives such as the peer specialist certification program which trains individuals who self-identify as consumers of mental health services to support others who receive services. We are very excited about this program as it takes advantage of the strengths of consumers who act as models for personal recovery and it creates job opportunities for them within our provider network. Ten people in the first class were certified and most of them are working. Our second class begins in June. This is just the beginning of an important program that will grow on an annual basis.

The budget maintains support for the Crisis Intervention Officer program—a partnership with the Metropolitan Police Department that already has trained hundreds of officers to recognize the signs of mental illness and to practice appropriate de-escalation technique and the new Mental Health First Aid program which trains non-clinicians to help a person developing a mental health problem or in a mental health crisis until the crisis is resolved or appropriate professional treatment is received. This training is intended for a wide range of audiences including friends and family of individuals with mental illness, faith communities, volunteer organizations, and front line professionals such as primary health care

workers and human resource directors. The program has generated much interest from a range of lay and professional people.

The FY 13 budget also includes funding from our continued partnerships with the Office of the State Superintendent for Education, the Department of Health, Child and Family Services Agency and the Department of Human Services for critical support for youth in foster care, provide intensive community based services for youth and their families and expand the number of evidence based practices available.

Finally, the proposed budget enables the Department of meet the requirements of the *Dixon* Settlement and the Department of Justice Settlement agreements.

FY 13 Budget Changes

The \$9.3million dollar increase in local funds supports important new commitments:

- 1.2 million for 100 new housing subsidies as required by the *Dixon* Settlement Agreement
- 1.3 million to fund a projected growth in the use of mental health services
- 3 million to pay for medical services at community hospitals for individuals in care at Saint Elizabeths Hospital, and
- 815,000 to implement the South Capitol Memorial Act passed by the Council through your leadership which expands behavior health services to young people.

The remaining \$3 million dollars accounts for inflation and supports adjustments in employee benefits.

I note that the budget also includes a \$1.7 million decrease in overtime and contracted nursing services at Saint Elizabeths Hospital to reflect projected savings from increased hiring of nursing staff and greater efficiencies in managing overtime.

In conclusion, the FY 13 budget keeps pace with the increased utilization of mental health services, allows the Department to meet its obligations to end external oversight, and funds important initiatives that expand access to care.

Mr. Chairman, we appreciate the consistent support that the Committee has shown the Department, and I am available to answer any questions. Thank You.