



STATES NEED MORE FUNDING TO ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

MHA Recommends Increase for Block Grant with 10% Set-aside for Prevention Activities

Program	Appropriations Bill	Agency	FY22	FY23 MHA Recommendation
Community Mental Health Services Block Grant	Labor-HHS	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)	\$857.6 million	\$1.65 billion

The nation’s mental health has worsened dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 41% of adults in the U.S. reported symptoms of anxiety and/or depression in August 2020 through February 2021, up from 11% pre-pandemic, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Meanwhile, the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Adolescent and Child Psychiatry, and the Children’s Hospital Association have [declared](#) a national emergency in children’s mental health, and the Surgeon General recently issued an [advisory](#) on protecting youth mental health. An online screening program run by Mental Health America (MHA) shows that youth, LGBTQ+ individuals, and individuals identifying as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) have been particularly affected by the pandemic.

While the demand for mental health services increases, funding has not kept pace. Unmet need for adults with mental illness increased by 18.9% in 2019 and by 20.7% in 2020. The percentage of youth who receive treatment for major depression has remained at roughly 40% for the past five years, indicating that over half of youth are untreated.

Funding Recommendation: Congress should provide \$1.65 billion in FY23 for the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant (MHBG) in line with the President’s FY23 Budget Request. The MHBG is the largest and most important program in the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill for helping states provide comprehensive mental health services. States use this block grant to fund mental health treatment and supports for people who are uninsured or unable to afford services and also to cover services that are not covered by insurance, such as crisis management, intensive in-home services, early psychosis care, and supported education and employment services. Services and supports are provided to adults with serious mental illness and children with serious emotional disturbance.

Prioritize Prevention: Congress should set aside up to 10% of MHBG funding for prevention activities. Research shows that early intervention and prevention activities can mitigate or in some cases prevent the incidence of mental health conditions. Currently, however, states are not allowed to use the MHBG to pay for early intervention and prevention activities,

and funding is limited to serving individuals who have already been diagnosed as having very high needs.

This restriction stands in contrast to the Substance Abuse Treatment and Prevention Block Grant, which includes a 20% set-aside for prevention. MHA urges Congress to give the same priority for prevention for mental health as it does for substance abuse.

About Mental Health America: MHA is the nation's leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness and promoting the overall mental health of all. MHA's national office and its state and local affiliates are driven by a commitment to promote mental health as a critical part of overall wellness, including prevention services for all; early identification and intervention for those at risk; integrated care, services, and supports for those who need them; with recovery as the goal.

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