



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH  
ALLIANCE OF MONTANA

DATE: June 10, 2021  
TO: Adam Meier, Director Montana DPHHS; Mike Foster, Chair ARPA Health Commission  
CC: Charlie Brereton, Governor's Health Policy Advisor; Kristen Juras, Lt. Governor; Marie Matthews, Director, Montana Medicaid  
RE: Request for Relief of Montana Behavioral Health Crisis Post-COVID 19

**The behavioral health system in Montana is in danger of imminent collapse unless it receives immediate relief.**

Montana has an enormous opportunity over the next 3.5 years to transform the broken behavioral health system into one that serves all our one million Montanans. With the influx of \$2.7B of American Recovery Program Act (ARPA) funding over the next four years, we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to not only fix the system but, transform it into a model for behavioral health in the United States. Under Governor Gianforte's leadership, we can finally develop sustainable solutions to mental health and substance abuse problems that have plagued the state for decades. The Behavioral Health Alliance of Montana submits these solutions with the full support of our members, and we stand ready to partner with DPHHS and the administration to enact the Governor's vision.

**I. IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IN MONTANA.**

The impact the pandemic has had on Montana mental health and substance abuse treatment agencies cannot be understated:

- Shodair has 74 beds for children and adolescents; only 30 beds can currently be staffed due to worker shortages. Shodair currently has a waiting list of 66 kids.
- Yellowstone Boys & Girls Ranch receives 110 referrals a month; they can only accept up to 10 kids per month at most.
- AWARE, due to staff shortages, has closed three children's homes, and has consolidated day services for an additional two therapeutic group homes and four developmental disability residences.
- Intermountain has closed one children's home due to an inability to staff the home.
- Youth Dynamics has 80 beds in 10 group homes and are at a full census and there is a current waiting list of 46 children. They have referrals for over 130 community children in need of services that are awaiting assessments to be performed.
- Rimrock has an adult substance use residential home closed due to staff shortages, with a waiting list of 6-8 weeks for residential homes that are in operation.
- Youth Homes is at capacity and is seeing dramatic increases in referrals from State agencies to accept children who are denied admission to higher levels of care due