

Kentucky's COVID Mitigation Funding Plan 2021 (MHBG) Submission

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Submission Due: October 1, 2021

Overview:

Kentucky received notice of COVID Mitigation funding on August 10, 2021, in the amount of \$562,833 for Substance Abuse Block Grant (SABG), and \$638,096 for Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG) available for expenditure between September 1, 2021 and September 30, 2025. As noted in the award letter from SAMHSA, people with mental health and substance use disorders are more likely to have co-morbid physical health issues like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and obesity. Such chronic illnesses have been associated with high instances of contracting coronavirus disease (COVID-19) as well as with higher risk of death or poor outcomes as a result of COVID-19. This Notice of award (NoA) provides one-time funding made available by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, and is available to expand COVID-19 testing and mitigation resources for people with mental health and substance use disorders. These funds are dedicated to provide resources and flexibility for states to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency and **ensure the continuity of services to support individuals connected to the behavioral health system**. Substance Abuse Block Grant (SABG) and Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG) require separate plans and budgets for this funding.

SAMHSA anticipates that as COVID-19 cases increase among unvaccinated people, and in areas where the more transmissible Delta variant is surging, this funding will expand activities to detect, diagnose, trace, and monitor infections and mitigate the spread of COVID-19, by providing resources and flexibility for states to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency and ensure the continuity of services to support individuals connected to the behavioral health system of care.

For the sake of the readers, which may include the Kentucky Behavioral Health Planning and Advisory Council and other interested parties, the specific requirements related to this funding are listed below.

- To fund activities in the behavioral health care system, related to COVID-19 infections and strategies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 through detection, diagnosis, tracing and monitoring.
- These funds are separate and apart from the statutory purpose behind SAMHSA's block grant and associated requirements.

Some examples of allowable expenses as described by SAMHSA include:

- Rapid onsite COVID-19 testing;
- Facilitating access to testing services;
- Behavioral health services for people in short-term COVID-exposure housing;
- Behavioral health services to staff working as contact tracers and other members of the COVID-related workforce;
- Financing the cost of test administration and purchasing of supplies like personal protective equipment (PPE);
- Supporting mobile health units, particularly in medically underserved areas;
- Training and technical assistance on implementing rapid onsite COVID-19 testing; and

- Promoting awareness of availability of these funds.

Examples of expenses NOT allowed with this funding are as follows:

- Activities related to purchasing, disseminating, or administering COVID-19 vaccines;
- Activities to address COVID hesitancy or vaccination activities;
- Costs already paid for by other federal or state programs, other federal or state COVID-19 funds, or prior COVID-19 supplemental funding;
- Construction projects;
- Support of lobbying/advocacy efforts;
- Facility or land purchases;
- COVID-19 mitigation activities conducted prior to September 1, 2021; and
- Financial assistance to an entity other than a public or nonprofit private entity.

Kentucky is pleased to present its plan for use of awarded COVID-19 Mitigation funds available to support testing and mitigation strategies for the COVID-19 public health emergency through September 30, 2025. As is the case across the United States and around the world, the pandemic has devastatingly impacted the citizens of Kentucky, including those citizens who seek or receive behavioral health services. With the surge of the Delta variant of the coronavirus, Kentucky's infection rate has significantly increased. To date, there have been 8,422 COVID-related deaths in Kentucky, and as of September 22nd there are currently 2,257 COVID-related hospitalizations. Of those hospitalized, 651 are in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and an additional 453 are on ventilators. Kentucky is currently experiencing an 11.66% positivity rate for COVID-19.¹ This additional funding offered from SAMHSA will benefit the public behavioral health system of care by supporting activities related to mitigating the spread of COVID-19 and ensuring Kentucky's behavioral health safety net remains intact.

The Kentucky Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (DBHDID), began planning in mid-August 2021, forming an intradepartmental planning group to discuss options and plans for distribution of these funds. This planning group consisted of Commissioner-level leadership, including the Department's Medical Director and Deputy Commissioner, Division of Behavioral Health leadership, including the Division Director (who is also the Single State Authority), and Division block grant staff.

To ensure effective and targeted distribution of COVID-19 mitigation funds, the intradepartmental planning group gathered information regarding the ongoing COVID-19 response and mitigation needs of behavioral health providers across the state necessary to ensure continuity of care for behavioral health clients. Input regarding current COVID-19 testing and mitigation efforts and gaps was obtained from a number of behavioral health providers and stakeholders. Kentucky's fourteen (14) Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) participated in a survey initiated by the Commissioner of DBHDID, which helped to assess current levels of testing and mitigation spending and opportunities to enhance mitigation efforts. Also providing feedback were non-profit substance use residential treatment programs, community-based homeless and housing programs for adults with serious mental illness, and the Kentucky Association of Regional Programs, Inc. (KARP), a non-profit association that leads, promotes and advocates for eleven (11) of the fourteen (14) Community Mental Health Centers in Kentucky. Stakeholder input highlighted the ongoing financial need to enhance mitigation efforts including COVID-19 screening, testing, mitigation strategies such as PPE, and contact tracing. Throughout the pandemic, programs have

aimed to ensure the provision of masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, and antiseptic cleaning supplies for both staff and treatment recipients. However, it was consistently reported that funding limited the ability to further mitigate risk and more efficiently protect staff and service recipients. In particular, maintaining ample supplies and PPE is often difficult, as is implementing rapid testing procedures, especially given the recent rise in transmission related to the Delta variant.

As the behavioral health safety net, CMHCs provide publically funded localized services for individuals and families with mental health, developmental and intellectual disabilities and substance use service needs. CMHCs provide services in all 120 counties and are well-equipped with skilled and trained staff that have extensive experience and expertise in implementing behavioral health services. The safety net is anchored by Kentucky's fourteen (14) CMHCs that provide behavioral health services across the state as prescribed in Kentucky state statute. DBHDID contracts with each of these CMHCs to provide behavioral health services to Kentucky's most vulnerable citizens. Programming for adults with SMI and children with SED, are included in these contracts, including but not limited to the following:

- Eight (8) Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC) programs for young people experiencing first episode of psychosis;
- Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams for individuals with SMI in each of fourteen (14) CMHC regions across the state;
- Supportive Permanent Housing services for individuals with SMI;
- Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Supported Employment Programs for SED/SMI/SUD;
- Peer Support Services for individuals with SED/SMI/SUD;
- Intensive Outpatient Programming for SUD/MH;
- Early Childhood Mental Health programming;
- Transition Age Youth Programming, including Drop-In Centers;
- Clinical High Risk for Psychosis programming;
- Day Treatment/Partial Hospitalization programs;
- Therapeutic Rehabilitation/Social Club Drop-In programs; and
- Crisis services (mobile crisis, crisis intervention, crisis stabilization units).

Several of these CMHC contracts include additional programming that is located outside of the CMHC but managed and/or overseen by the CMHC, including homeless programs, peer support specialist programming, and consumer-operated services programs. In addition, many CMHCs provide/oversee additional behavioral health programs that are managed outside of the DBHDID contracts, including substance use residential programming and additional supported housing programs.

DBHDID also contracts with a variety of additional non-profit entities to provide services for adults with SMI and children with SED. These include some "boots on the ground" programs that touch homeless and precariously housed individuals with SMI/SED such as Wellspring, Inc., in Louisville, Kentucky and New Beginnings, Inc. in Lexington, Kentucky. In addition, DBHDID supports non-profit organizations for individuals with lived experience and family members/parents, such as the Kentucky Partnership for Families and Children (KPFC) and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Lexington. The NAMI Lexington program is located within a consumer operated services program, which is staffed by individuals with lived experience and provides warm line services, various education and support sessions throughout the week, and additional outreach services for individuals with mental illness. KPFC is directly involved with the Transition Age Youth Drop-In Centers located in several areas across the state. These Drop-In

Centers are also staffed by young people with lived experience, in addition to having CMHC supervision. KPFC and NAMI have continued to provide in-person services and support throughout the pandemic, although at times switching to virtual service packages for brief periods, when necessary, due to increasing COVID-19 cases in their service area.

Throughout the pandemic, Wellspring has continued to work in Kentucky's largest city to identify and locate homeless individuals with SMI/SED and provide them with safe, supportive resources including mental health services. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as face masks and gloves, hand sanitizers, disinfectant supplies, and other items have been distributed to staff and individuals being served as available, and through work with the Assertive Community Treatment Team that makes regular contact with homeless camps, the crisis stabilization unit, the regular supportive housing programs for adults with SMI, and through working with the multiagency homeless coalition. Wellspring has also worked alongside the Louisville Metro Police Department in providing some of these services during the pandemic.

New Beginnings, a supported housing program for adults with SMI in Lexington, Kentucky, has been providing masks, hand sanitizers and disinfectant cleaning supplies to the individuals they serve, as they find housing and provide necessary support services to ensure these individuals are able to successfully maintain adequate housing. This program has provided in-person services throughout the pandemic.

The CMHCs have continued to provide services since COVID-19 first appeared in Kentucky in early March 2020, including some telehealth services, some in-person, and some hybrid service packages that include virtual with in-person at times. CMHCs report they have been providing masks, gloves, and other supplies as they are able, to staff and to those they serve but funding to do so is limited.

COVID-19 Mitigation Funding Plan

DBHDID will provide COVID Mitigation Funds to each of the fourteen (14) Community Mental Health Centers to assist with COVID mitigation strategies. These include enhanced COVID-19 testing processes for staff and/or service recipients, contact tracing, PPE, and other allowable activities or supplies necessary to combat the spread of COVID-19. CMHCs will be encouraged to utilize these resources to support programming under their purview, including crisis stabilization units (child/adult), consumer-operated services programs (COSPs), Drop-In Centers, Day Treatment/Partial Hospitalization programs, therapeutic rehabilitation programs, peer support specialist programs, ACT teams, housing teams, and other programs, with the focus being on programming that necessitates in-person contact and/or in-home support.

In addition, DBHDID will provide COVID-19 Mitigation Funds to Wellspring, Inc. and New Beginnings, Inc. to support mitigation efforts necessary to conduct services for the most vulnerable populations with SMI in the two (2) most populous areas in Kentucky, Louisville and Lexington respectively. This funding will support the maintenance of services necessary to keep some of the most vulnerable adults with SMI in safe and adequate housing and access to safe and adequate support services.

DBHDID will also provide COVID-19 Mitigation Funds to NAMI Lexington and KPFC to assist with more safely mitigating the risk of COVID within their programs staffed by some of our more vulnerable citizens.

These funds will be distributed through DBHDID standard contract modification processes. Kentucky DBHDID operates on the State Fiscal Year (July 1 – June 30). Modifications occur at specific times throughout each fiscal year. Funding will be distributed by the end of calendar year 2021.

It is anticipated that these funds will be expended prior to September 30, 2025. However, as funds are expended, annual totals will be reconciled and reported at the end of each year as required. DBHDID will redistribute available funds through the same process until all COVID Mitigation Funds have been expended.

COVID-19 Mitigation Funding Budget

COVID Mitigation Funding Plan 2021 (MHBG) Amount: **\$638,096**

Proposed Budget

SFY 2022 (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022)

Total Proposed Expenditures: \$435,000

- Community Mental Health Centers: **\$420,000 (14 CMHCs x \$30,000; approx. \$5,000 per month)**
- Wellspring and New Beginnings: **\$10,000 (2 x \$5,000)**
- NAMI Lex and KPFC: **\$5,000 (2 x \$2,500)**

Proposed Budget

SFY 2023 (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023)

Total Proposed Expenditures: \$203,096

- Community Mental Health Centers: **\$189,000 (14 CMHCs x \$13,500)**
- Wellspring and New Beginnings: **\$10,000 (2 x \$5,000)**
- NAMI Lex and KPFC: **\$4,096 (2 x \$2,048)**

Kentucky has allocated up to \$5,000 per month for each CMHC from January 2022 through June 2022. Due to DBHDID contracting schedules, funding will not be made available until the start of calendar year 2022. \$13,500 has been allocated for each CMHC for SFY23. Other providers - Wellspring, New Beginnings, NAMI Lex and KPFC - are allocated between \$2,048 and \$5,000 each year through June 2023. These allocation estimations are based on feedback collected from stakeholders in efforts to assess and target mitigation needs. If funding is not fully expended during specified contract periods, DBHDID will redistribute funding as needed.

¹ Cabinet for Health and Family Services. Department for Public Health data as of September 22, 2021.