



**34<sup>th</sup> Biennial Institute**  
FOR **Georgia Legislators**

# Behavioral Health Reforms Update





Governor's Office of  
PLANNING AND BUDGET  
THE STATE OF GEORGIA

# Governor's Office of Health Strategy and Coordination

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## *Behavioral Health Reform Update*

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Director

Carl Vinson Institute of Government's 34<sup>th</sup> Biennial Institute for Georgia  
Legislators  
December 10, 2024



## Creation of OHSC

- House Bill 186 (2019 Session)
- Since 2021, OHSC operates as a division of the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget
- **Mission:** break down the silos between government agencies, health care providers, and health care consumers and to promote health care policies that increase access and quality

### **Statutory Powers and Duties:**

*“Strengthen and support the health care infrastructure of the state through interconnecting health functions and sharing resources across multiple state agencies and overcoming barriers to the coordination of health functions.”*

*“Facilitate collaboration and coordination between state agencies, coordinating state health functions and programs, serving as a forum for identifying Georgia’s specific health issues of greatest concern, and promoting cooperation from both public and private agencies to test new and innovative ideas.”*



## Behavioral Health Reform & Innovation Commission (BHRIC)

- House Bill 514 (2019 Session)
- Chaired by DBHDD Commissioner Kevin Tanner
- The 24-member commission is responsible for reviewing several key areas of behavioral health, represented by subcommittees:
  - **Children and Adolescent Behavioral Health**
  - **Involuntary Commitment**
  - **Hospital and Short-Term Care Facilities**
  - **Mental Health Courts and Corrections**
  - **Workforce and System Development**
- Workgroups:
  - **Aging Adults**
  - **Dental**
  - **Homelessness**
  - **IMD Waiver**
  - **Medicaid**
- Annual Report



## Mental Health Parity Act (HB 1013)

- **HB 1013 / "The Mental Health Parity Act" of 2022** is a historic piece of legislation that represents a bipartisan effort to overhaul current behavioral and mental health processes in the State of Georgia and create alignment with federal mental health parity laws
- HB 1013 codifies the recommendations from the BHRIC First Year Report
- Spans the areas of focus of the BHRIC subcommittees

### Agencies Impacted

CJCC  
DBHDD  
DCH  
DCS  
DECAL  
DHS  
DJJ  
DOE  
DPH  
DPS (GPSTC)  
GBHCW  
GDAC  
GDC  
GSFC  
OCA  
OCI  
OHSC  
TCSG  
USG





## Mental Health Parity Act (HB 1013)

- **Legislation contains six parts:**
  - Part I: Mental Health Parity Provisions
  - Part II: Workforce and System Development
  - Part III: Involuntary Commitment
  - Part IV: Mental Health Courts and Corrections
  - Part V: Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health
  - Part VI: Additional Miscellaneous
    - DCH Medicaid Reimbursement Study
    - Georgia Data Analytic Center
    - Extension of the Behavioral Health Reform and Innovation Commission



- HB 1013 implementation
- Related legislation
- Executive Order for Agency Data Sharing



# Thank you!

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OHSC Website:







**D·B·H·D·D**

# **Building a Future of Hope and Healing: Understanding DBHDD's Role in Georgia's Communities**

**Commissioner Kevin Tanner  
Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities**

**Carl Vinson Institute of Government's 34th Biennial Institute for Georgia Legislators**









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**REGIONAL RESOURCES**

Google Earth  
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy



# DBHDD's Investments in Georgia's Public Safety Net

**Supporting the  
Criminal Justice  
System**

**Building a  
Workforce  
Pipeline**

**Increasing  
Provider  
Rates**

**Expanding  
Access to  
Crisis Care**

**Planning for  
Increased  
Demand**

# **Strengthening Crisis Response: Crisis Bed Capacity Study**

## **OBSTACLES**

### **CRISIS BED CAPACITY**

To meet the growing demand for crisis beds, Georgia will require the addition of 8 new crisis centers over the next 10 years. Five out of these eight facilities are needed before 2025.

### **FORENSIC SERVICES**

DBHDD offers hospital-based forensic services to restore individuals to competency before standing trial. Study projects 232-bed gap for forensic treatment by 2025. Forensic waitlist expected to reach 800 individuals.

## **SOLUTIONS**

Three new Behavioral Health Crisis Centers are underway for Fulton, Dublin and Augusta.

DBHDD is working to determine a location for an additional crisis center in the Atlanta/North GA area.

Nearly 100 forensic beds will be brought online by end of 2024. DBHDD is investing in initiatives to reduce reliance on hospital-based forensic treatment and address forensic waitlist.

# Strengthening Crisis Response: Serving Individuals with Developmental Disabilities



**PARRISH**  
CONSTRUCTION GROUP

INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (I/DD)  
CRISIS STABILIZATION DIAGNOSTIC CENTER (CSDC)

MACON, GEORGIA



**First-ever Crisis Services  
Diagnostic Center in Macon**



# Strengthening Crisis Response:

## 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

- Less than 15 seconds to answer
- Year-to-date, the 988 Lifeline in Georgia has managed 217,785 contacts through calls, texts, and chats.
- September 2024: 26,627 contacts—a mix of calls, texts, and chats.
- Surge in outreach corresponds to a 17% increase compared to the average monthly volume in 2023.
- Rural south Georgians are reaching out for help at higher rates than urban areas.

**988**

SUICIDE & CRISIS  
**LIFELINE**

# NOW/COMP Waivers: Serving Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

**Approach:** DBHDD ensures access to high-quality, safe services, especially for individuals with complex behavioral or medical needs. Services are supported through state funding and two Medicaid waivers:

- **NOW Waiver:** Supports individuals living independently or with family, enabling community engagement.
- **COMP Waiver:** Primarily for residential care for those needing more intensive support.



4,266 Individuals  
Enrolled in NOW  
Services



9,398 Individuals  
Enrolled in COMP  
Services



**TOTAL: 13,651**  
**Georgians Receiving**  
**Vital Community-based**  
**Services**

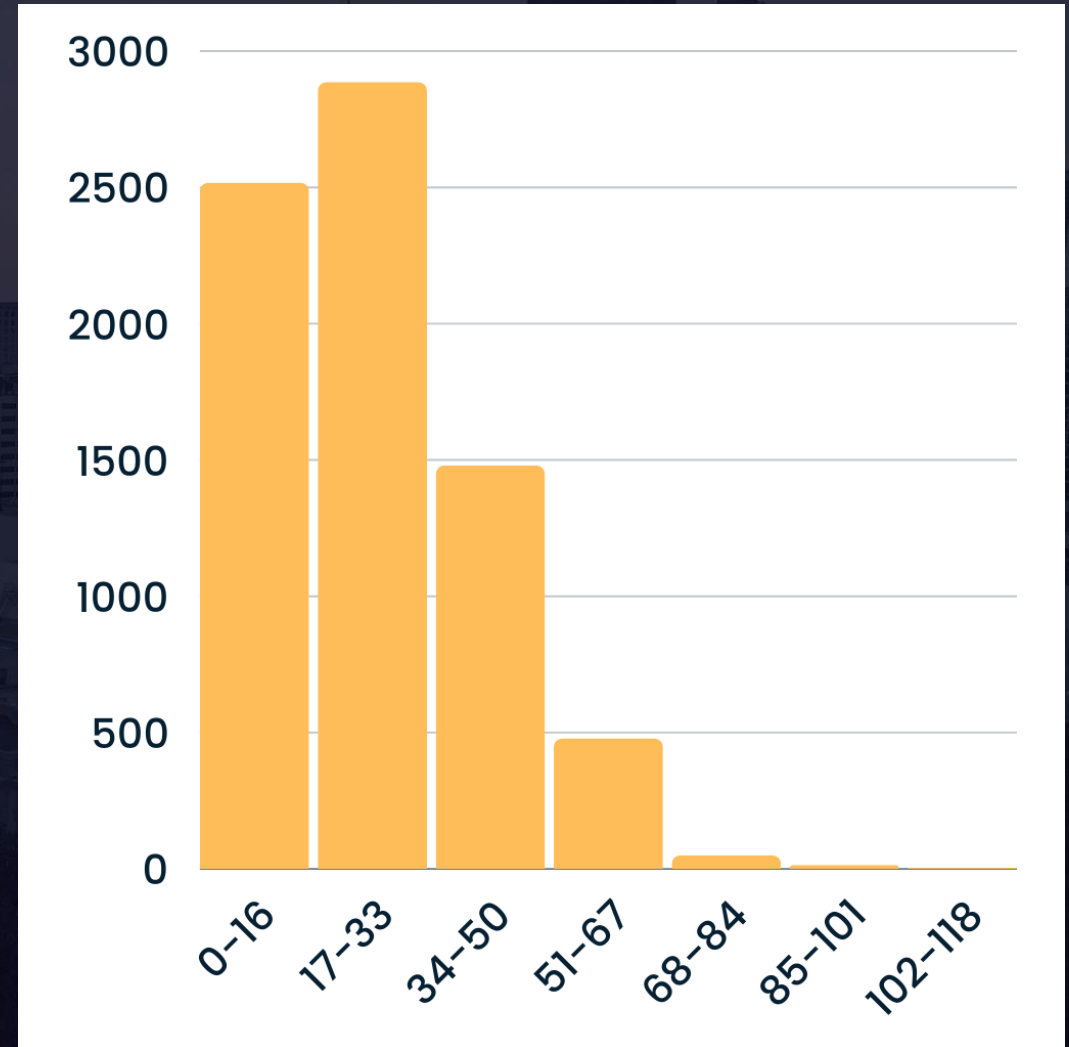
# NOW/COMP Waivers: Planning for the Future

The Planning List: estimates the future needs of Georgians who may require NOW and COMP services.

DBHDD estimates **7,400+ Georgians will be eligible for services in the future**. 3,200+ of these individuals are under 21 years of age.

- The waiver serves as a last-resort payor and cannot replace other programs, such as school services, if they cover an individual's needs.
- NOW and COMP waiver prioritization depends on life events and unmet need scores (0–117), based on DON-R, Behavioral, and Medical Needs Screens.
- DBHDD works closely with individuals and families, updating prioritization if needs increase.

# of Individuals on Planning List



Needs Score Range



# Forensic Services: DBHDD's Critical Role in the Criminal Justice System

DBHDD's Forensic Services provides court-ordered mental health evaluations and treatment for individuals involved in the criminal justice system. Key responsibilities include:

**Evaluations:** Assessing if individuals are competent to stand trial or meet criteria for criminal responsibility (insanity).

**Inpatient Care:** Offering hospital-based treatment for individuals found incompetent to stand trial or not guilty by reason of insanity who need intensive care.

**Outpatient Services:** Supporting individuals with community-based competency restoration and monitoring under court supervision.

# Forensic Services: Snapshot of Obstacles

## Pre-Trial Evaluations Snapshot: Fall 2024

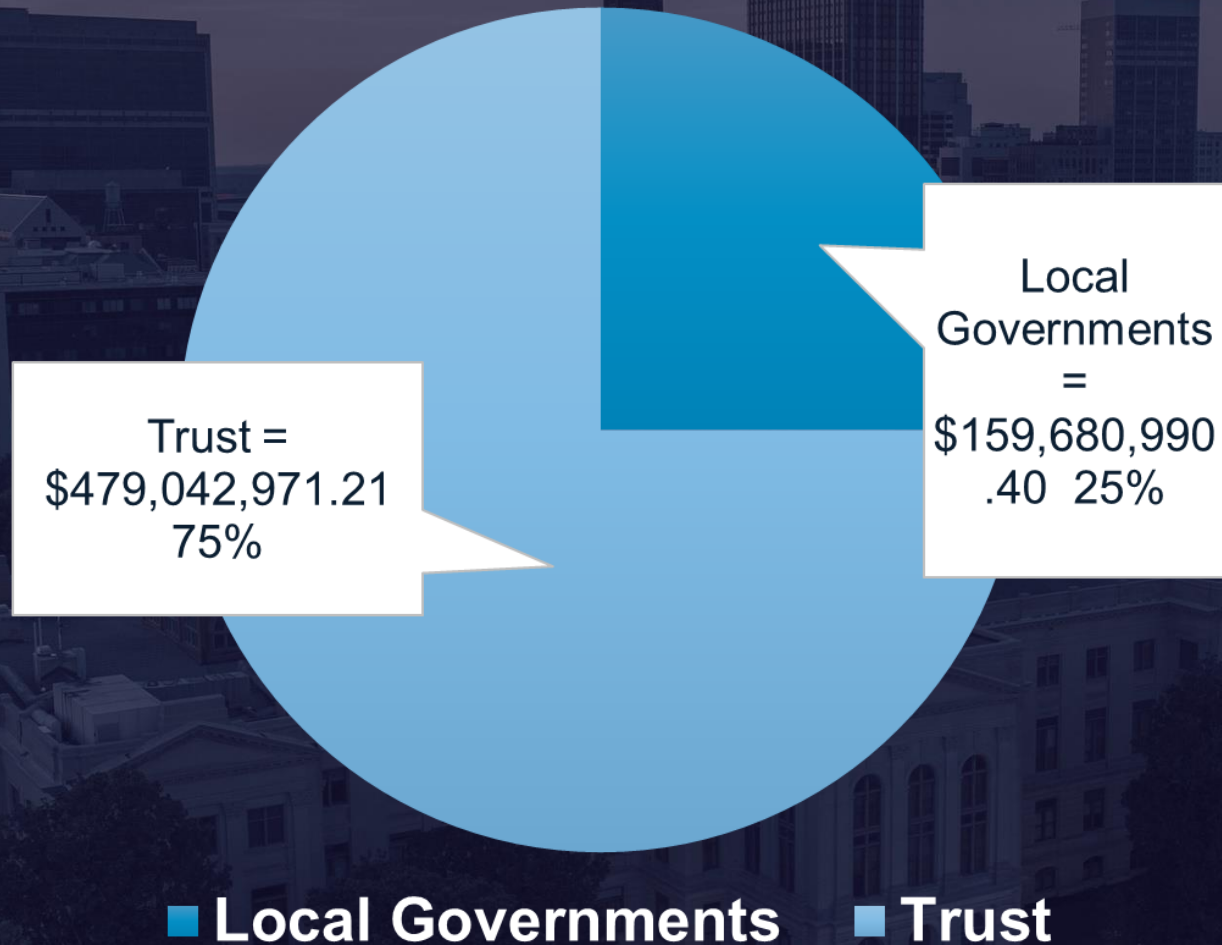
- 867 adults awaiting pretrial evaluations.
- 190 juveniles awaiting pretrial evaluations.

## Hospital Bed Crisis Snapshot: Fall 2024

- 641 hospital beds for Forensic Services
- 232-bed gap by 2025
- 770 individuals waiting for a hospital bed
- Admission Wait Times: 330+ days for males and 260+ days for females

# Allocation of Settlement Funds: \$638 million

## GEORGIA OPIOID CRISIS ABATEMENT TRUST





# Behavioral Health Reform and Innovation Commission

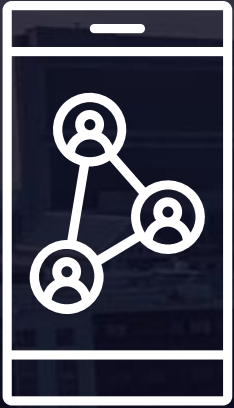
- Reviews workforce shortages, systemic barriers, and the role of education in early identification and treatment.
- Addresses the effects of untreated behavioral health issues on the justice system and explores support needs for individuals transitioning out of it, all to improve mental health outcomes statewide.
- The Commission held its final 2024 meeting on November 25.
- Recommendations will be submitted ahead of 2025 legislative session.

## **The Commission's Forensic Workgroup:**

**Examining court process  
to determine if orders will  
be issued for competency  
evaluations.**

**Determining possible  
improvements  
surrounding misdemeanor  
charges and mental  
health.**

# Follow DBHDD



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## Questions?

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