

2026 ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



1. MAXIMIZE ACCESS TO CARE

Everyone with a mental health or substance use condition should be able to get the care they need. Access to care is not meaningful if it is not readily available and adequately funded.

Real access requires:

- **Increased and sustained funding of county and community providers** that reflects the full scope and breadth of the services that communities need across the entire continuum of care.
- **Strong parity enforcement** so mental health and substance use care are covered the same way as physical health care.
- **Fewer practical barriers to treatment**, including long wait times, outdated rules, inadequate reimbursement, and “fail first” insurance practices.



2. IMPROVE CRISIS RESPONSE

Mental health and substance use crises need a healthcare response, not default reliance on emergency rooms or law enforcement.

Effective crisis response requires:

- **Fully-funded 988 and mobile crisis services** that can respond quickly and locally.
- **Sustained investment in crisis stabilization programs and step-down options** to reduce ER boarding, incarceration, bottlenecks, and repeated crises.
- **Better cross-system coordination** among providers, schools, hospitals, law enforcement, housing, and human services.



3. EXPAND THE WORKFORCE

A strong behavioral health system depends on a stable, supported workforce.

Workforce stability requires:

- **Support for the peer and recovery workforce** as essential members of care teams.
- **Recruitment and retention tools** such as loan repayment, tax credits, and other incentives.
- **Fewer administrative and licensing barriers** that slow hiring and service delivery.

Get Involved |  

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BUCKS-MONT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH BY THE NUMBERS

Residents across Bucks and Montgomery Counties ranked mental health as their TOP health concern in 2025—highlighting urgent community need.

Ranked #1 by residents in Bucks (43.7%) and Montgomery (41.6%) Counties.

Source: 2025 Regional Community Health Needs Assessment for Southeastern Pennsylvania

1 in 4 adults
in our region experience
mental illness.



5.6% live with *serious* mental illness.

Source: SAMHSA Nat'l Survey on Drug Use and Health: 2021-2023 Model-Based Substate Estimates (PA Substate Regions 7, 13, 20, 33—Bucks, Chester, Delaware & Montgomery Counties)

12-13 per 100,000 Suicide death rate in Bucks & Montgomery Counties (2022)

Nearly half of people who died by suicide in PA in 2022 had a diagnosed mental health condition.



Source: PA Violent Death Reporting System (2022 Suicide Fact Sheet)



13,352

988 calls answered by Montgomery County Emergency Service in 2025.

Demand for crisis support continues to rise.

Source: Montgomery County Emergency Service 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Local Network Center Impact Report (2025)

“ Behavioral health and substance use visits continue to strain our hospital ERs and inpatient units. Without stronger investment in community-based care, that strain will affect the entire health system. ”

— Kimberly M. Permar, Executive Director, Bucks County Health Improvement Partnership



62%
of communities
nationwide lack enough
mental health providers.

Source: HRSA Mental Health Workforce Shortage Data



1 in 4 adults
nationwide who needed mental health care
in 2024 did not receive it.

Source: SAMHSA Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health