

# Behavioral Health System Information Sheet

## Senior behavioral health investment

The senior behavioral health investment strengthens services for older adults and people with disabilities in communities across Oregon. It does this by increasing collaboration and coordination among the agencies that serve this population, and by making sure that the people who care for them are well trained.

### Why focus on aging?

Every day 10,000 Americans turn 65 years old. This trend will continue until 2029.

Today 15.4 percent of Oregonians are 65 years or older. By 2030, that figure will increase to 20 percent. The 75-and-older age group will be growing even faster.

This trend has implications for health, including behavioral health:

- 15-20 percent of older adults have depression, which if untreated leads to other health problems;
- Men aged 75 and older have the highest suicide rate;
- Up to 15 percent of older adults are at-risk drinkers; and
- Up to 23 percent deal with prescription drug misuse.

Investment in effective strategies, including effective collaboration, care coordination, and a force of well-trained workers, will help ensure the health, safety and independence of older adults.

### What is senior behavioral health investment?

The state is investing in senior behavioral health to better meet the needs of older adults and people with disabilities by improving access to care, and by making sure that providers work together to provide coordinated, high-quality physical and behavioral health care.

The goal is improved quality of life for older adults. And over time, through sharing and adoption of best practices, the cost of care will actually be reduced.

This investment will place 25 professionals who specialize in behavioral health for older adults in local and regional community mental health programs. Their role will be to improve the ability of each community's behavioral health system to provide the type of services older adults need. They will work closely with local aging services staff as well as primary care providers and hospitals.

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## The role of these older adult behavioral health specialists:

- Make sure older adults receive the appropriate help at the right time and at the right level;
- Remove barriers to care, identify things that need improvement and get people and programs working together;
- Provide training, coaching and technical assistance that will improve each community's ability to address the behavioral health needs of older and disabled adults.

## Role of advocates and stakeholders

An advisory group of advocates and other stakeholders will help shape the ongoing project and help decide which services to add in each community. Services include:

- Interventions to treat depression and anxiety;
- Assessment and prevention of suicide;
- Complex behavioral health assessments that look at chronic medical conditions and their impacts, medication misuse, and addiction issues.

## What has been achieved so far?

- The Oregon Health Authority hired a state older adult behavioral health coordinator in February 2015.
- OHA has completed contracts with counties and regional entities for older adult behavioral health specialists.
- The Portland State University (PSU) Institute on Aging, under contract with OHA, has created a program to train communities to respond to older adults' behavioral health needs. Training is to begin in May with state Behavioral and Aging Health staff.

## What is next?

OHA will work with community partners to complete the hiring of the older adult behavioral health specialists. OHA will work with PSU and local partners to make sure that the training provided to aging and disability services staff at the state and local levels is well-designed and effectively put in place.

And OHA Addictions and Mental Health will develop metrics to measure the way the senior behavioral health investment is implemented on the ground. The metrics themselves and data collected to measure performance will be posted on the Addictions and Mental Health website.

## Citations

[www.cdc.gov/aging](http://www.cdc.gov/aging)

[www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/)

[www.ncoa.org/improve-health/](http://www.ncoa.org/improve-health/)

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