



Behavioral Health Initiative

Launched in 2015 to meet the needs of older adults and people living with physical disabilities by improving timely access to care from qualified providers who work together to provide coordinated, quality and culturally responsive behavioral health and wellness services.

Behavioral Health Specialists

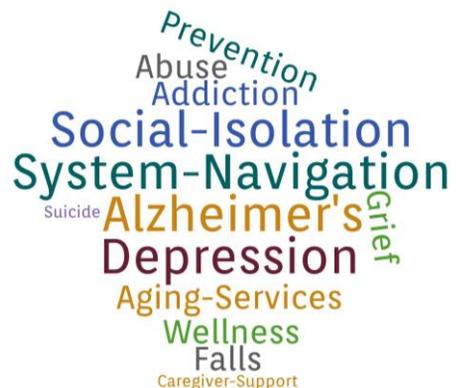
The Initiative, funded through the Oregon Health Authority, comprises 24 Specialists statewide, who are trained in social work or psychology. Specialists promote collaboration and coordination among care stakeholders and partners. They provide complex case consultation for older adults and people with disabilities. They offer workforce development training to professionals as well as community education.



Sobering Statistics

- **By 2030, there will be 1 million adults 65 or older in Oregon.¹**
- **One quarter of older adults reported experiencing mental health issues since the start of COVID-19.²**
- **More than half didn't receive any mental health services.³**
- **25% of older adults with recent SMI got no treatment.³**

BH Specialist Training



Sources: 1. Oregon Office of Economic Analysis, Demographic Forecast; 2. Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF); 3. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

The evaluation



- Data collected by the PSU Institute on Aging shows the Initiative has made a difference through establishing community partnerships, trainings and consultations.
- Interviews with Specialists and stakeholders confirm serious service gaps, inappropriate treatment and a lack of coordinated resources.
- As our population ages, the need for BH services will continue to grow.



Recommendations

- Address gaps in affordable housing and enhanced care for older adults
- Hire more well-trained behavioral health staff with geriatric competencies, especially in rural areas
- Ensure sustained funding for mental health services
- Elevate the role of Behavioral Health Specialists
- Insist on greater coordination between agencies and more integration of services on the ground

Find more information here: OregonBHI.org



Voices from the field

"I think there is a lot of work that still needs to be done. But I now have a starting place for how to serve people. Before there was a lot of red tape. Now there are points of contact to move, actually move forward."

"The initiative has made our agency more aware of the older adult population and how they can be more creative in their service delivery. For example, we have a couple of clinicians who were going into care facilities and providing services at the facility instead of having older adult consumers transported to our agency. The agency also recognized the need for in-home services delivery (instead of having them come to us)."

"Clients with dementia or something related to dementia who present at the hospital with what looks like a MH issue Having [the Specialist] there to help get these folks the right placement is invaluable and has saved a handful of lives by not sending them to the ER. Educating doctors and nurses has a far-reaching effect as well."