The Ohio Council COVID-19 Behavioral Health Provider Impact Survey Results

The Ohio Council collected information from behavioral health providers through three survey requests during the initial weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic. The data has remained relatively consistent through these three survey requests regardless of response rate. From these surveys we know that behavioral health providers continue to accept new admissions and provide services, mostly through telehealth; weekly revenues related to service utilization show a decrease of approximately 20-40% for most providers; providers are experiencing considerable cash flow deficiencies; and providers have had to layoff or furlough staff related to decreased service utilization and cash flow concerns. The charts in this report represent the data trends over time.

- The initial survey request was conducted from 03/17-03/19/2020. 145 members responded to this survey, representing approximately 90% of our membership.
- The second survey request was conducted from 03/30-04/02/2020. 125 members responded representing approximately 80% of our membership.
- The third and most recent survey request was conducted from 04/22-04/24/2020. 85 members responded, representing over 50% of our membership. Although this a decrease from the first two surveys it is still a substantial data set.

For your reference, the full reports for the past 3 surveys are available below:

- 4/24/2020 Survey Results
- 4/3/2020 Survey Results
- 3/20/2020 Survey Results

A total of 1158.95 FTEs have been laid off or furloughed as of 04/24/2020. That total represents an increase of nearly 300 additional FTEs laid off or furloughed since the prior report on 4/3/2020 and an increase of almost 700 additional FTEs laid off since our initial report on 3/30/2020. Although fewer organizations participated in this survey the impact on workforce is significant.
Even with the use of less restrictive telehealth to deliver services, behavioral health providers continue to experience a significant decrease in weekly service utilization. The majority of organizations report a continued decrease in services resulting in decreased revenue. 48% of organizations report a **21-40% decrease** in weekly revenue and 25% of organizations report a **41-60% decrease** in weekly revenue. Service access and client engagement remains strong, however, the duration of appointments using telehealth has declined impacting revenue and new appointments are equally stagnant or declining. This is devastating to behavioral health providers as they typically operate on budget margins of 1-3% and count on their revenue to maintain services.
The initial version of the COVID surveys did not include a question related to days cash on hand. However, data on days cash on hand was collected from member organizations from 02/07/2020-02/12/2020 related to ongoing issues with BH redesign and managed care carve-in. The data from the February survey is an indication of pre-pandemic cash on hand. Although, a majority of providers still have less than 45 days cash on hand, this data could falsely give the impression that some providers are in a better cash position than prior to the pandemic. However, the most recent cash position of organizations is most likely attributed to funds received from the federal assistance programs through the Small Business Administration. Of the 85 organizations responding to the 04/24/2020 survey, 29 organizations received funds from the Payroll Protection Program (PPP), 12 organizations received the $10,000 Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) advance, and 2 organizations received funds from the EIDL.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on behavioral health organizations in Ohio. Service utilization has markedly decreased due to a combination of fear related to contracting the virus for in-person services and inability to access telehealth due to barriers related to internet capacity and limited cellular minutes. The decreased revenues related to decreased services has forced organizations to layoff or furlough staff in an environment already operating with a significant workforce shortage.

Although service utilization has temporarily decreased, the need for treatment is still prevalent as indicated by increased alcohol sales, regional spikes in overdose deaths, and the volume of crisis calls being received by providers, peer and family supporting associations, and the MHAS COVID crisis line. An April 2020 COVID-19 Study conducted by the Cohen Veterans Network indicates that 81% of people surveyed report they believe the pandemic will have a negative impact on the mental health of Americans. 88% report access to mental health care is more important as a result of the pandemic, but only 14% report accessing care during this time. The pandemic and its associated repercussions will certainly create a significant increase in the number of Ohioans who need access to behavioral health treatment. Without ongoing support, most behavioral health providers will struggle to meet the demands of the anticipated mental health surge related to the pandemic.