



LEGISLATIVE REQUESTS IN COLLABORATION WITH THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ALLIANCE OF MONTANA



WHAT: Fully implement the Medicaid rate study of the behavioral health system (serving people with mental illness, substance use issues, and/or intellectual or developmental disabilities), including an annual COLA tied to the Producer Price Index.

WHY?

- AWARE's services save taxpayer dollars.
- Improve access to services to meet the mental health needs of Montana.

HOW?

BY HELPING PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS TO AVOID PLACEMENTS IN HIGHER LEVELS OF CARE.

WHAT ARE HIGHER LEVELS OF CARE?

Some examples include emergency rooms, hospital admissions, detention centers, institutions like the state hospital in Warm Springs, or out-of-state facilities.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

These higher levels of care are stressed for resources due in part to them trying to serve people with chronic behavioral health needs. Many of these people are referred to community-based providers like AWARE; however, there are extensive waiting lists for AWARE's services due to inadequate funding to maintain a viable workforce.

WHAT IS AWARE DOING TO BE A PART OF THE SOLUTION?

- To maintain a viable workforce that serves Montanans with chronic behavioral health challenges, AWARE has increased average wages by 35.5% in the last three years.
- AWARE has expanded case management programs and intensive community-based behavioral health wraparound services.
- *AWARE has increased wages despite the fact that payment rates for our services have only increased an average of 1.1% per year in the last 15 years.*

WHY IS IT CRITICAL FOR MONTANA TO FULLY IMPLEMENT THE RATE STUDY RECOMENDATIONS THAT THE 2021 LEGISLATURE COMMISSIONED?

Even with AWARE's extensive efforts to increase wages, offer competitive staff benefits, and allow healthy staff work-life balance, AWARE still has a 17% employee vacancy rate (160 positions).

The Medicaid rate study commissioned by the 2021 Legislature identifies the rates necessary to pay for reasonable costs to keep the community-based behavioral health system of care intact.



QUICK FACTS

We serve more than **4,500 Montanans each year**

AWARE employs more than **700 people across the state**

With adequate funding AWARE could employ 950 people.

AWARE serves all 56 counties in Montana.

AWARE has offices in Anaconda, Belgrade, Billings, Butte, Great Falls, Helena & Missoula with remote workers & telehealth available for the remainder of the state.



AWARE has been CARF Accredited since the 1980s.

WHAT WE DO

Community Care & Treatment

- Case Management
- Home Support
- Psychiatry
- Outpatient Therapy
- Education & Mental Health Support in Schools
- Behavior Analysis/Autism Treatment
- PACT/FACT: Intensive supports for kids & adults w/ mental health needs

Residential Services

- AWARE's residential homes help youth and adults with mental health and/or developmental disabilities live in the communities of their choosing and out of higher levels of care.
- AWARE has more than 40 homes across the state.

Early Childhood Services

- AWARE Early Head Start has 28 classrooms at 10 sites in 5 communities, including 4 childcare partners and served 214 families in FY22.

LEARN MORE AT WWW.AWARE-INC.ORG