



Maryland Behavioral Health Connect

Frequently Asked Questions

Maryland Behavioral Health Connect (MD BH Connect) is under development. This document provides responses to frequently asked questions and will be updated as implementation progresses.

If you are a licensed provider, start the onboarding process on the [Maryland Behavioral Health Connect website](#).

General

Q: What is Maryland Behavioral Health Connect?

Maryland Behavioral Health Connect (MD BH Connect) is a technology platform under development that will streamline access to behavioral health care across the state. This platform will help hospitals and other providers more efficiently find and refer patients to appropriate mental health and substance use disorder treatment at no-cost. View the [MD BH Connect summary](#).

Q: Who will use MD BH Connect?

Hospitals and licensed behavioral health providers will be able to use MD BH Connect, including but not limited to emergency departments, inpatient psychiatric care, crisis services, and outpatient services.

The public will also be able to view and search for licensed behavioral health providers.

Q: What problem will MD BH Connect seek to solve?

Today, finding and connecting patients to behavioral health care often means phone calls, faxes, and manual searches across multiple disconnected systems, which can lead to delays in care. MD BH Connect will replace these inefficient, manual processes with a fast, digital solution that will improve communication and coordination across hospitals and behavioral health providers to accelerate access to the right care statewide.

Q: Under what authority is MD BH Connect being established?

[HB 1121 of 2020](#) established a bed registry and referral system, now known as Maryland Behavioral Health Connect. Additionally, [Health-General Article §7.5-802](#) outlines requirements related to submitting bed availability to the state and care coordination.

Q: What will be the key elements of MD BH Connect?

Service Directory: A directory of licensed mental health and substance use disorder service providers — available to providers and the public.

Psychiatric Inpatient Bed Availability: Hospitals will have more robust and timely information on bed availability to streamline referrals to psychiatric inpatient care and reduce treatment delays.

Electronic Referrals: Hospitals and behavioral health providers will be able to electronically send referrals to multiple providers at a time and communicate to support streamlined patient placement, eliminating the need for faxes and significantly reducing calls.

What Providers Need to Know

Q: What will the benefits be for providers?

- No cost to use the platform
- Quickly find licensed services for patients, including psychiatric inpatient beds
- Update bed availability automatically, eliminating manual processes
- Receive and send standardized electronic referrals to accelerate patient flow

Q: Will there be a cost to use the MD BH Connect platform?

No. The MD BH Connect platform will be free for licensed providers in Maryland to join and use.

Q: Will MD BH Connect replace anything?

There is currently no statewide technology platform that lists all licensed behavioral health providers or allows for electronic behavioral health referrals and communication between providers.

MD BH Connect will replace the manual process of inpatient psychiatric providers updating bed availability at least three times per day in the [Hospital Care Coordination Dashboard](#), with the capability for psychiatric inpatient hospitals to automatically update availability leveraging their electronic health record or bed tracking system.

Q: Will providers be required to use MD BH Connect?

MD BH Connect will maximize its impact to streamline referrals and help Marylanders get the care they need if all licensed behavioral health providers participate.



[Health-General Article §7.5-802](#) requires inpatient psychiatric providers to report bed availability at least three times per day to the state designated system. The current designated system is the [Hospital Care Coordination Dashboard](#). Maryland BH Connect will become the designated system by January 2027.

Hospitals and other providers are highly encouraged to use the system to align with the purpose of [HB 1121 of 2020](#) and [Health-General Article §7.5-802](#). This will include maintaining an updated profile in the Service Directory and conducting electronic referrals within the platform.

Q: Will MD BH Connect meet federal privacy and security regulations?

Yes. MD BH Connect will be built on Bamboo Health's platform, which is designed to meet all applicable federal and state regulatory requirements for handling Protected Health Information (PHI), including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). The platform will adhere to HITECH and 42 CFR Part 2 regulations, which means sensitive information related to substance use disorder treatment is handled with the additional layer of protection that federal law requires.

Q: I am part of a large organization with many locations. Will our organization be able to have multiple accounts with multiple users?

Yes, provider organizations will be able to create multiple accounts and have multiple users. Different locations and different licensed service lines will be able to have their own users. For example, there will be users in a hospital Emergency Department who will send referrals, and there will be users in a hospital inpatient psychiatric unit who will both receive and send referrals.

Q: Will State Hospitals use the MD BH Connect platform?

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) does not currently anticipate including State hospitals, because nearly all referrals for these facilities come through pathways specific to individuals with MDH forensic involvement.

Information Technology

Q: Will data on MD BH Connect be secure?

Yes, providers will be able to use the system to securely coordinate care with confidence that patient data is protected. MD BH Connect will reside on the Bamboo Health Platform, which is a secure network and has received HITRUST certification. In addition to passing this assessment, PHI will never be shared in the body of an e-mail communication or notification. Attachments related to patient referrals will be deleted from the system within a specified time.

The system will adhere to strict Federal and State security standards, including MARS-E, and NIST cybersecurity frameworks. All MDH data will be stored exclusively in U.S. data centers and will be



encrypted both in transit and at rest. Additionally, the system will undergo an independent SOC 2 Type 2 audit annually to verify the effectiveness of its security controls.

Q: What technical standards will be used to connect MD BH Connect with external hospital systems?

The platform will utilize industry-standard protocols, including HL7, FHIR, EDI, and API. These will allow hospitals and behavioral health providers to exchange patient-related information and update real-time bed capacity directly from their own Electronic Health Records or Electronic Medical Records.

Onboarding

Q: I'm interested in joining MD BH Connect. What are the next steps?

Hospitals and licensed behavioral health providers are encouraged to start the MD BH Connect onboarding process to be prepared for the platform launch. The first step is to sign a No Cost Agreement. Visit the [MD BH Connect website for providers](#) to get started.

Q: Is a Business Associate's Agreement (BAA) necessary to register with MD BH Connect?

Yes. All providers must sign a BAA since PHI will be shared. The BAA is contained in the Subscription Services Agreement, which is a no cost agreement and can be accessed here: [Subscription Services Agreement](#). If your organization prefers to use its own BAA please send a copy for review to: mdcontracts@bamboohealth.com.

Have a question that was not answered here?

[Submit your questions](#)