

Baltimore County Department of Health, Bureau of Healthcare Access

Describe the services you offer, and the number of clients you service, utilization of your services, etc.

The Baltimore County Department of Health offers HIV testing, case management, linkage to care, and a variety of supportive services such as EFA (medication assistance, food vouchers, eviction prevention, utility assistance), transportation, HOPWA housing subsidies, support groups and a number of other public health and screening and prevention services that are not HIV-specific, but a part of the larger mission of a local health department.

BCDH's HIV Case Management Program serves approximately 450 clients each year covering both medical and non-medical case management services along with the categories mentioned above. The HOPWA program funds approximately 86 families each year with a waiting list that is currently closed. Some services are available to any resident of the EMA, but only those who live or work in Baltimore County are eligible for BCDH Medical Case Management services.

What trends are you seeing among your client base and in your services?

The biggest trend we are seeing in terms of infection is a sustained shift in new cases to young MSM of color, the majority of whom identify as African American. This group represents approximately 70-75% of (verified) new cases reported to our Partner Services program. This does not represent all newly-reported cases in Baltimore County. However, this trend is confirmed by epidemiological data. This trend should impact how services are delivered.

The other emerging trend is the way healthcare is delivered to clients previously covered by Ryan White. Many patients are now covered by health insurance plans requiring a new understanding and awareness of provider networks, referral systems, and out-of-pocket expenses. For youth, it may also involve benefit statements and information on treatment being sent to their parents in the form of EOB statements.

Aside from Ryan White, what other funding streams are available to your organization for the services you provide?

There are limited funds for financial assistance to clients, but as a local health department there are a number of services provided to anyone that meets the eligibility criteria.

How has the implementation of the Affordable Care Act impacted the services you provide, or how do you anticipate it will impact your services in the future?

ACA will require case managers to become far more familiar with health insurance networks, benefit plans, out-of-pocket expenses, and an understanding of electronic health records. Over time, a better understanding of out-of-pocket costs for Ryan White-eligible clients is needed to ensure that these costs are not a barrier to care. It is too soon to get a reliable estimate on

what out-of-pocket costs may be. Many clients are unaccustomed to paperless referrals and this has its unique challenges for adherence.

Is your organization taking any unique/innovative approaches to client services with the Ryan White funding you receive?

Yes. There are staff in the case management program who specialize in health insurance coverage. Until recently, efforts were focused on ensuring MADAP, MA, PAC, and MHIP programs were being renewed and pursued. It's now evident that more familiarity of the various QHPs are also needed.

In addition, case managers, along with the help of non-Ryan White-funded staff, have become more involved in providing CDC-approved curricula on prevention and risk reduction to clients. These programs were always available to clients, but the focus was historically on high-risk negatives in the community. Over the past two years, case managers have been offering them to clients and many have become trained in WILLOW for groups and POWER (and other curricula) for individual sessions.