

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Department of Behavioral Health



Open Government Report 2014

To institutionalize a culture of transparent and open government, accountability, and to expand opportunities for resident participation and collaboration, this Report describes how the Department of Behavioral Health has and will continue to develop and enhance transparency, public participation, and collaboration. In accordance with Mayor's Order 2014-170, this report addresses the following topics:

1) **Transparency**

Describe the steps your agency has taken or plans to take to be more transparent. Please include a description of:

- *How and to what extent your agency shares information with the public, e.g. publication of information in the District register and on the agency website, press releases, and documents in the agency's FOIAXpress reading room.*

The Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) communicates with the public through timely posting of information on its website, including a twice yearly report on service costs, utilization and access to mental health services, a monthly report on key performance measures at Saint Elizabeths Hospital, and regular news releases describing services, new initiatives, or public events/meetings. DBH also posts a monthly calendar of meetings for providers.

The website is used to provide notice to the public of contract solicitations and funding availability for grant initiatives. The DBH Training Institute which is open to the public posts a calendar of classes for online registration.

DBH posts notice of proposed rules and regulations in the *District Register*.

- *How the agency meets its obligations pursuant to the District's Freedom of Information Act and Open Meetings Act.*

DBH responds in a timely manner to all Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. DBH uses the new FOIAXpress software to process FOIA requests and share information.

- *Steps your agency will take to increase public access to information.*

DBH will begin in January issuing a news release that calls attention to a proposed rule or regulation published in the *District Register* and to solicit public comment.

- *Steps your agency will take, including an implementation timeline, to webcast live and archive on the internet board or commission meetings. (This question only applies to agencies that are overseen or advised by a board or commission that is subject to the Open Meetings Act.)*

NA

- *How your agency has taken or plans to take steps to make more of its data available to the public.*

DBH is working closely with the Office of the City Administrator (OCA) and the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) to identify a significant number of datasets that OCA and OCTO expect to publish online later this year. If no dataset from DBH is selected to be included in this 2014 release, we will continue to work with OCA and OCTO to identify datasets appropriate to publish in 2015. In the future, requirements for open data reporting will be provided by the Chief Data Officer.

2) **Public Engagement and Participation**

Describe the steps your agency has taken or plans to take to enhance or expand opportunities for the public to participate in agency decision-making. Please include a description of:

- *How your agency provides online access to proposed rules and regulations and secures public input on them. Please list links to specific websites.*

NA

- *How your agency shares information and resources to keep the public properly informed, e.g. community meetings, public hearings, FAQs, and ways the public can provide input such as Twitter, grade.dc.gov, email contacts.*

DBH regularly participates in community meetings, health fairs and other special events to share information about available services. DBH funds four Prevention Centers that service all eight wards. DBH also maintains two websites aimed at youth about drug prevention including one about the dangers of synthetic marijuana, and the Prevention Resource Clearinghouse which provides educational materials on maintaining healthy living free of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs and reducing factors that place youth, families and communities at risk.

- *How your agency identifies stakeholders and invites their participation.*

DBH works closely with advocates, providers, consumer/clients and their families, and government agencies with similar functions. However, we use multiple ways to share information with the general public and solicit input.

- *Steps your agency will take to improve public engagement and participation including any new feedback tools or mechanisms the agency is considering.*

DBH will begin in January issuing a news release that calls attention to a proposed rule or regulation published in the District Register and to solicit public comment. In early 2015, DBH is establishing the Behavioral Health Council made up of government agencies, providers, advocates, consumers/clients and their families to advise the Director on policies and services.

3) **Collaboration**

Describe the steps your agency has taken or plans to take to enhance or expand cooperation among departments, other governmental agencies, the public, and non-profit and private entities in fulfilling its obligations. Please include a description of:

- *How your agency currently collaborates with the above parties. Please list links to specific websites if appropriate.*

DBH spearheaded last year the establishment of the Creating Community Solutions Task Force which is now supported by the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation to call attention to mental health needs and available services with a focus on children and young adults. DBH also participates in the DC Collaborative for Mental Health in Pediatric Primary Care to increase collaboration between pediatric primary care providers and child behavioral health specialists.

DBH coordinates the Prevention Policy Consortium, which consists of 15 different District agencies, that provides guidance on the development and implementation of a strategic substance use prevention plan.

- *Steps your agency will take to improve collaboration with the above parties including any new feedback tools or mechanisms the agency is considering, e.g. prizes, competitions, and other innovative methods.*

DBH will continue to create opportunities to strengthen collaboration. For example, as part of its annual Children's Mental Health Awareness Day celebration, DBH routinely offers prizes to increase participation among public school students.