



The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

The DC Fiscal Policy Institute blog

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The Department of Behavioral Health Budget: Our Thoughts

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Today, many residents and organizations, including DCFPI, will share their thoughts on the proposed fiscal year 2014 budget for the Department of Behavioral Health, a newly created agency that will take on the functions of the Department of Mental Health and substance abuse services now managed by the Department of Health.

Here is what DCFPI is saying:

- **A proposed funding increase for mental health services will help ensure that DC residents have timely access needed care.** The budget would add \$7 million in local funds for mental health services for residents on Medicaid and \$2 million for mental health treatment for low income residents not on Medicaid. The funding will help expand services to residents and increase provider reimbursement rates that have gone largely unchanged since 2001. This would alleviate cost pressures that have made it hard for community-based providers to stay in business, which in turn would increase access to treatment for DC residents.
- **The Committee on Health should find a way to expand school-based mental health services — instead of leaving it on the mayor's "contingency funding list."** The District has mental health clinicians in 53 schools, providing a range of services from early intervention and prevention to treatment of more severe issues. Demand for the program is high, with schools on a waiting list to receive a clinician and some participating schools having a separate waiting list for students. The budget includes a \$1.9 million proposal to help 19 additional schools receive a full-time clinician, but this is on the budget's "contingency funding list" and will be funded only if DC's revenues rise beyond current projections. The DC Council should find a way to fund this expansion rather than leaving it on a wish list.

Our full testimony can be found [here](#).