

Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association

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REHABILITATION & COMMUNITY
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Workforce shortages, funding needs jeopardize access to vital, life-changing services
Pennsylvania's health and human services providers in dire need as staffing and funding needs threaten reductions, closures

HARRISBURG (May 24, 2022) --- The Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association (RCPA), the Commonwealth's largest and most diverse health and human services trade association, is calling for funding to support programs and services beneficial to millions of Pennsylvanians and for investment in the direct care workforce that is facing a massive staffing crisis.

Today, RCPA members rallied at the Capitol and advocated for funding for critical services in such areas as intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism, county-based mental health, and brain injury. They also called for lawmakers to recognize the challenges facing addiction treatment providers that treat the Medicaid population when allocating opioid settlement funds.

"Many of these providers faced mounting challenges before the onset of the pandemic, and the compounding effects are pushing providers to the brink," said Charlie Barber, RCPA Board Chair and CEO of Erie County Care Management. "Calls for funding must be heeded to ensure vulnerable Pennsylvanians have access to care and services."

A bipartisan group of lawmakers, including Reps. Dan Miller, Jessica Benham, and Carrie Lewis DelRosso, as well as Sherri Landis, Executive Director of The Arc of Pennsylvania, also spoke at the rally to press for adequate support for these essential services.

Behavioral health (BH) and intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) providers have already been facing the harsh realities of staff turnover and vacancies. Late 2021 data shows that 50 percent of IDD and BH providers in Pennsylvania have reduced service capacity and that the open position vacancy rate is near 25 percent.

"Public safety net providers struggle to compete for wages with the public sector," said Barber. "Most human services professionals are paid less than \$15 per hour, which simply isn't competitive in comparison to starting salaries at fast food restaurants and warehouses. But because of the way our programs are funded, we need lawmakers to act to increase wages."

RCPA is requesting the General Assembly release unspent American Rescue Plan federal stimulus dollars to help alleviate the workforce challenges, with \$75 million being directed to BH providers and \$65 million for IDD services. The funding will help recruit and retain therapists, counselors, case managers, peers, human services professionals, and direct support professionals.

"Supporting access to care through program funding and workforce investment allows providers to care for the health and well-being of our most vulnerable residents," said Barber. "The sustainability of programs and services hinges upon adequate funding, which requires our lawmakers to take action."

[Visit here](#) for more information about RCPA's 2022/23 budget requests that will ensure care for Pennsylvanians seeking mental health, drug and alcohol, intellectual and developmental disabilities, children's, brain injury, medical rehabilitation, and physical disabilities and aging services.

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About the Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association (RCPA):

With well over 350 members, the majority of who serve over 1 million Pennsylvanians annually, Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association (RCPA) is among the largest and most diverse state health and human services trade associations in the nation. RCPA provider members offer mental health, drug and alcohol, intellectual and developmental disabilities, children's, brain injury, medical rehabilitation, and physical disabilities and aging services, through all settings and levels of care. Visit www.paproviders.org for more information.

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