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April 8, 2022

To: All ODDS Staff and Partners

From: Lilia Teninty, Director, Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS)

Subject: Legislative report on barriers to mental health services

In 2021, the Oregon Legislature passed Senate Bill 5529 (SB 5529). The bill directed the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) and the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to:

- Identify where Oregonians served by ODDS and Aging with People with Disabilities (APD) experience barriers when accessing mental health services through Medicaid.
- Develop strategies and provide recommendations to improve access to services for Oregonians who are dually diagnosed and require services from multiple systems.
- Report the results to the Legislative Assembly in February 2022.

## **Partners**

ODDS, APD and OHA worked with broad range of partners to gather information for this report including individuals receiving services, their families, case management entities, providers, the Stabilization and Crisis Unit, Children's Intensive In-Home Services and subject matter experts.

Thank you for your participation in these focus groups. Your feedback helped us better understand the significant systemic barriers Oregonians experience when trying to access mental health services and how those barriers are worse for people who face additional challenges such as disability and language access needs.

Your feedback provided the basis for the strategies and actions recommended in the final report, “SB5229 Report: Barriers to Mental Health Services for Older Adults and People with Disabilities Oregon Department of Human Services and Oregon Health Authority.”

## **Recommendations**

In the report, ODHS and OHA propose the following actions:

- Issue a specific policy and strengthen existing policies to prevent discrimination in all treatment provider systems to ensure the full inclusion of older adults and individuals with intellectual, developmental and physical disabilities. Create processes that ensure compliance.
- Develop stronger communication pathways between APD, ODDS, OHA and community mental health programs.
- Develop processes and procedures to ensure mental health services are delivered in a person-centered and accessible manner, culturally and linguistically appropriate, and provided where individuals are comfortable receiving services.
- Support existing efforts to address the ongoing workforce shortage.
- Develop methods to coordinate services for people with complex needs and facilitate local dialogue on coordination and integration.
- Work with community partners to explore strategies to coordinate different Medicaid authorities and ensure all individuals receive appropriate services and supports through a person-centered plan that meets all their needs. Present those strategies to the legislature for consideration in 2023.
- Request an ongoing discussion with the legislature and community partners about the prioritization in state statute for mental health services and the restrictions on APD to serving individuals with mental illness.

The [full report is available to read online in English](#). For other languages, large print, braille or a format you prefer, contact the Oregon Office of Developmental Disabilities Services at 503-945-5811.

The ODDS staff and I look forward to working with you as we implement these actions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lilia". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning.

Lilia Teninty  
Director  
Office of Developmental Disabilities Services

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