

Cook County Regional Behavioral Health Strategic Plan

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Tom Nutter, MD

CCH Chief Behavioral Health Officer



COOK COUNTY
HEALTH

Origins and Rationale for a Countywide Strategic Plan



- Development of a Countywide Behavioral Health Strategic Plan has been planned even prior to the creation of the Office of Behavioral Health team.
- The purpose of the plan is to improve collaboration across systems of care, enhance coordination of services across agencies, bolster collective advocacy, upgrade tracking and assessment of initiatives, and establish a common blueprint for all entities providing behavioral health services across Cook County.
- **Vision:** To foster a healthier and more resilient county where all residents have equitable access to timely, comprehensive, compassionate, and high-quality behavioral health services. We envision a county where behavioral health care is prioritized as an essential component of overall well-being and where support is integrated and available to everyone regardless of background, circumstances, or zip code.

Guiding Principles for Countywide Strategic Plan



Collective Advocacy and Community Engagement—Develop countywide and Regional Behavioral Health Collaboratives built upon existing stakeholder networks and working groups to optimally understand, respond, and advance the behavioral health system.

Diversity—Prioritize and recognize that embracing varied perspectives and experiences enriches our community and enhances the effectiveness of behavioral health programs and services.

Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed Models of Care—Promote, adapt, and disseminate evidence-based practices to enhance care quality and improve treatment outcomes.

Health Equity – Every individual in Cook County should have access to convenient, high-quality services along a continuum of care that promotes prevention and early intervention; crisis assessment; and intervention, recovery, and support.

Inclusion – Stakeholders with diverse backgrounds and roles in behavioral healthcare are welcomed, culturally and socially accepted, and engaged in efforts to build a countywide vision for the behavioral health continuum.

Innovative Community Models – Support and facilitate innovative, locally-generated approaches to addressing the behavioral health and health related social needs of all Cook County residents.

Process for Developing the Plan

- Perspectives and evaluations of the current system were gathered formally through the Behavioral Health Summit, the Community Needs Assessment, and the Workforce Symposium (latter a joint project of CCDPH and OBH) as well as through myriad conversations both internally and with community partners.

Summit brief: <https://pdflink.to/summitbrief2024/>

Community Needs Assessment: <https://dashboards.mysidewalk.com/dashboard-3-bd91756958c0/copy-of-community-need-and-behavioral-health-status-295a93a7b1d2>

Workforce Assessment: <https://cookcountyhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/Cook-County-Behavioral-Health-Workforce-Full-Report-Cook-County-BH-Workforce-Assessment-October-2024-FINAL.pdf>

- Goals, Objectives, Strategies, Tactics, and Metrics developed for each Priority Area.

- To ensure support and alignment across governmental entities, a number Intergovernmental meetings were held starting in August 2024. These will be continued quarterly going forward.
- Participants included representations from CCH/CCDPH, Chicago Dept of Public Health (CDPH), Justice Advisory Council (JAC), and the following State Agencies:
 - Healthcare and Family Services (HFS)
 - Department of Mental Health (DMH)
 - Substance Use Prevention & Recovery (SUPR)
 - Behavioral Health Workforce Center (BHWC)
 - Children's Behavioral Health Transformation
- Strategic Plan and Priority Areas were Mentioned in the December Regional Collaborative meetings.
- Draft plan was sent in January 2025 to more than 1200 community partners. All submitted comments were reviewed and several are being incorporated into the final draft.
- Five Community Forums, one for each of the five priority areas, were held in February 2025. Total attendance was approximately 500 for these sessions.

Registrants of the Community Forums

Registrants by Priority Area

| | |
|--|-----|
| Systems Alignment, Thursday, February 13th, 10:30 AM CST | 190 |
| Prevention and Early Intervention: Youth and Families, Thursday, February 18th, 12:00 PM CST | 246 |
| Behavioral Health Workforce, Thursday, February 20th, 9:00 AM CST | 283 |
| Access to Treatment, Support, and Recovery, Monday, February 24th, 10:00 AM CST | 267 |
| Crisis System Enhancement, Tuesday, February 25th, 12:00 PM CST | 246 |



Registrants by Role

| | |
|---|-----|
| Behavioral Health Provider | 160 |
| Government | 67 |
| Administrative or Management Role in Behavioral Health | 195 |
| Individual with Lived or Living Experience in Behavioral Health | 66 |
| Other | 164 |



Priority Areas

- **Systems Alignment:** Lead collaborative and coordinated efforts to align priorities, funding, resources, data, and other administrative structures across state, county and local jurisdictions. This Behavioral Health Strategic Plan aims to address both the broad, systemic challenges and the specific, complex needs of targeted populations.
- **Workforce Development:** Strengthen and expand the behavioral health workforce with a focus on training, retention, and increasing cultural competency to meet the diverse needs of the communities we serve.
- **Prevention and Early Intervention with Children, Youth, and Families:** Develop a robust, culturally sensitive system of care for youth and their families, ensuring access to prevention, early intervention, and treatment services. This area will address family support needs, as well as the integration of behavioral health services into educational and community-based settings, to ensure that youth and families receive comprehensive and coordinated care.
- **Access to Treatment, Support, and Recovery:** Enhance access to comprehensive treatment services, create seamless pathways to recovery, and ensures that support systems are in place to guide residents through their behavioral health journey. This area requires addressing disparities in service availability, reducing barriers to care, and ensuring that individuals are supported throughout their recovery process.
- **Crisis System Enhancement:** Expands and refines the crisis response system to ensure timely, effective, and appropriate care for individuals in crisis, reducing reliance on emergency services, and supporting long-term recovery.

Priority Area: Systems Alignment

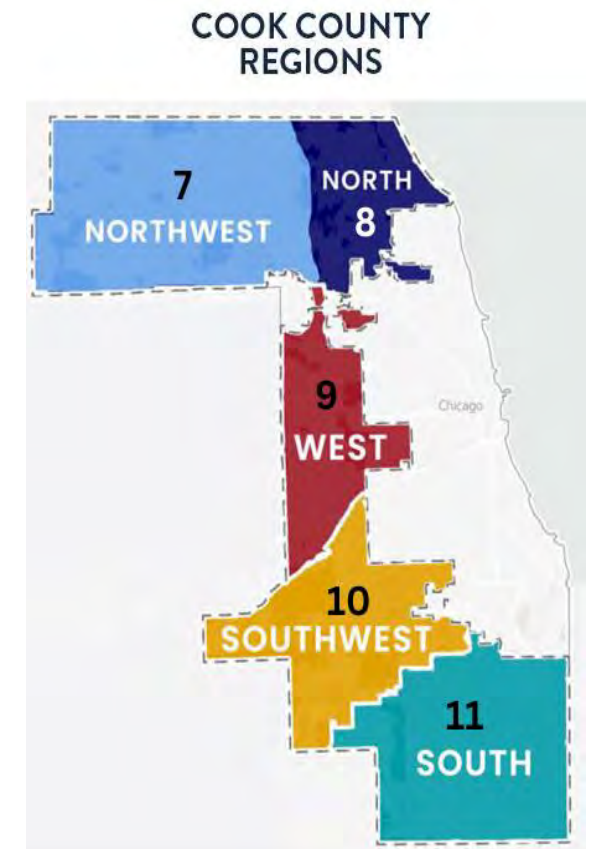
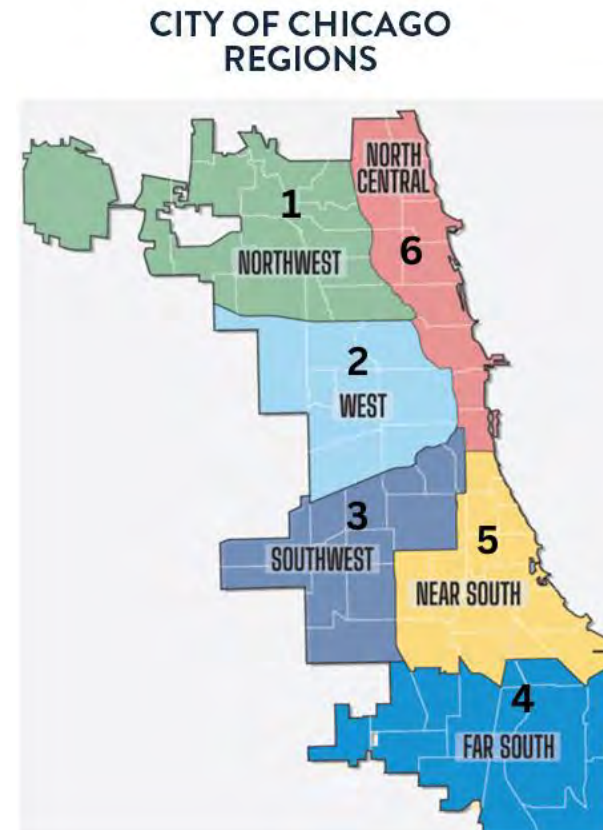
Goal 1: Engage stakeholders at the hyperlocal, county and state level to advance the alignment of an equitable, cohesive, and responsive behavioral health system

Goal 2: Develop standardized metrics for data-informed decision support, planning, and evaluation of the countywide behavioral health system

Goal 3: Optimize resources and funding for behavioral health services to create a comprehensive and responsive behavioral health system that ensures all community members have access to the care they need where and when they need it.

Regional Collaboratives

- While the Office of Behavioral Health is committed to transforming the behavioral health ecosystem of Cook County, we know that **true transformation requires ALL of us to work together.**
- Because Cook County is the second largest county, the Office of Behavioral Health is creating **11 Regional Behavioral Health Collaboratives** to best meet the diverse behavioral health needs at a hyperlocal level
 - 6 regions based on Chicago Department of Public Health's Chicago Health Equity Zones, and
 - 5 regions based closely to Cook County Department of Public Health regions in suburban Cook.



Priority Area: Workforce Development

Goal: Support the expansion and retention of a culturally informed, inclusive, and trauma competent behavioral health workforce countywide to address the diverse needs of the community and to improve overall health outcomes.

Objectives:

1. Provide Competitive Compensation
2. Increase Awareness of Behavioral Health Careers
3. Offer best-in-class community Behavioral Health “Learn and Earn” Opportunities
4. Supporting local agencies in retention of staff
5. Advocate for reduction of administrative burdens

Priority Area: Prevention and Early Intervention with Children, Youth, and Families



1. **Goal 1:** Improve the mental and social well-being of Cook County youth and families through a comprehensive continuum of behavioral health services available when and where they need them.
2. **Goal 2:** Support the healthy development of youth, reduce the likelihood of future difficulties, and promote the well-being of Cook County families.
3. **Goal 3:** Expand access to evidence informed, trauma-competent, culturally, and linguistically responsive treatment, support, and recovery services for youth and families in Cook County.

Priority Area: Access to Treatment, Support, and Recovery

Goal: Expand access to and coordination of a full continuum of evidence-based, trauma-competent, culturally informed, linguistically responsive treatment, support, and recovery services.

Objectives:

1. Increase access and improve systems alignment through the promotion of a comprehensive, community-focused system of care model.
2. Enhance quality of treatment, recovery, and support services for all residents.
3. Reduce opioid deaths

Priority Area: Crisis Care

Goal: Bridge gaps in the crisis care continuum to minimize reliance on law enforcement, legal system contact, or emergency room admission and reduce potential trauma and criminalization of behavioral health issues.

Thank you!



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