

The Issue

Across North Carolina, while the public Local Management Entity/Managed Care Organization (LME/MCO) system effectively serves thousands of youth involved in local Departments of Social Services (DSS) or Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities, there is a subset of youth with very complex behavioral health needs, often inclusive of intellectual and developmental disability (I/DD) needs, where there are challenges in securing needed treatment.

- These youth have endured a very challenging combination of circumstances, including severe trauma and loss of their living arrangement. Such circumstances have resulted in long stays in the emergency department (ED), DJJ detention centers, or DSS offices. These inappropriate settings create significant negative health impacts on the youth involved and considerable stress and concern on the individual, their families, and agencies charged with supporting them.
- During 2018-19, Alliance spent \$15.6 million for the care of 83 of these youth within our four-county catchment area (\$188,000 per individual). Despite this high level of spending for these youth, outcomes were often less than optimal.

Building a Comprehensive Service Continuum

To improve care for these youth, a multifaceted continuum of support must be developed – a continuum that builds upon current services and promotes focused initiatives to address identified gaps in the system. Alliance Health has developed and is implementing a comprehensive plan to improve treatment and support for these individuals and their families. We are investing over \$15 million to address gaps in the service continuum across our service area to ensure that youth with very complex needs have access to a specialized array of services.

The goals of our plan are to:

- Reduce the number of youth who require out-of-home placement.
- Reduce the time that youth spend in residential care.
- Ensure effective treatment that accounts for the impact of multiple traumas.
- Improve the mental health, resiliency, and prognosis of these youth.

To reach these goals, Alliance is investing in the following elements:

Rapid Placement/Stabilization

- Completing a new Child Crisis and Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center in the fall of 2021 to serve youth and families across Alliance's entire region.
- Expanding specialized residential services to include higher-level Crisis Group Home setting (20 new beds).



Evaluation and Transition Support

- Developed a proposal for the creation of a new Community Residential Setting to address a critical gap in the State's current service continuum. Designed to effectively address the complex needs of youth and promote reunification with family, this setting is an innovative campus-based model based on best practices in other states that would be a first-of-its-kind investment in North Carolina's behavioral healthcare system.

Engagement in Long-Term Foster Care/Kinship

- Advocating for state policy changes to increase the number of available foster families and kinship placements. Foster parents are licensed by NC DSS.
- Improving placement stability by providing support and training to agencies through Alliance's Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) Collaborative.
- Expanding specialized TFC capacity inclusive of I/DD and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) needs.
- Improving accountability for TFC agencies with our DSS partners through mutual contract expectations.
- Promoting effective trauma-informed care models.
- Increasing the available models of kinship care support.

Early Identification/Intervention

- Implemented High Fidelity Wraparound and Case Coordination pursuant to comprehensive care planning.
- Employing Mobile Outreach Response Engagement and Stabilization (MORES) mobile intervention for youth and their families experiencing behavioral health crisis – prompt 24/7 access to de-escalation, assessment, and transition services/supports.
- Identifying youth at risk for placement disruptions to intervene early before a crisis.
- Implementing early trauma assessments to expedite linkage to appropriate services.