



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

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NELSON SMITH  
COMMISSIONER

May 1, 2024

To: The Honorable L. Louise Lucas, Chair, Senate Finance & Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Luke E. Torian, Chair, House Appropriations Committee

From: Nelson Smith, Commissioner, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services

Re: Item 311.NN, 2023 Appropriations Act

Item 311.NN of the 2023 Appropriations Act requires the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) to report on the establishment of Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Programs (CPEP's) in the Commonwealth. Specifically, the language reads:

*NN. Out of this appropriation, \$10,000,000 the second year from the general fund is provided for comprehensive psychiatric emergency programs or similar models of psychiatric care in emergency departments. Projects may include public-private partnerships, to include contracts with private entities. All selected programs must collaborate with the region's community services board or behavioral health authority. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, contracts entered into pursuant to this paragraph shall be exempt from competition as otherwise required by the Virginia Public Procurement Act §§ 2.2-4300 through 2.2-4377, Code of Virginia. The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services shall report quarterly on projects awarded with details on each project and its projected impact on the state behavioral health facility census. The report shall be submitted to the Chairs of House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee no later than 30 days after each quarter ends.*

CC: The Honorable Janet V. Kelly, Secretary of Health & Human Resources

## **Introduction**

Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Programs (CPEPs) provide emergency psychiatric services to individuals experiencing psychiatric crises. These programs are located in hospitals, typically within a dedicated space within or adjacent to emergency departments. They are staffed 24 hours per day with physicians, nurses, social workers, and other staff. Services provided include emergency psychiatric assessment, emergency medicine evaluation, case management, medication stabilization, extended observation, crisis intervention, discharge planning, and referrals to the next level of care. In addition, a required service for CPEP programs funded by DBHDS includes a bridge clinic, which provides community psychiatric care upon discharge from the CPEP, until individuals can be seen by their permanent psychiatric provider.

By providing immediate, specialized care in emergency departments, CPEPs can serve to divert individuals from psychiatric hospitalization, including hospitalization at state hospitals, and prevent further psychiatric decompensation. They also provide a designated space for individuals in crisis to receive care in emergency departments that is therapeutic, secure, and safe.

## **Status of CPEP Programs in Virginia**

Virginia's only current operational CPEP in Virginia is located at Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital. This program has been operational for approximately three years.

DBHDS issued a Request for Proposals for a CPEP program in DBHDS Region 5 (Southeastern Virginia) in the summer of 2023. This RFP was awarded to Chesapeake Hospital Authority in Chesapeake, Virginia in late 2023. The total cost of this new CPEP will be \$3,726,900 in one-time funding.

This program is in development and is expected to be operational in February 2025. This program is expected to divert individuals from state hospitalization to ambulatory care, community crisis care, or inpatient care at community-based inpatient units. A specific requirement of the contract is that Chesapeake Hospital Authority partner closely with their local Community Services Board, Chesapeake Integrated Behavioral Health, including their emergency services and community crisis programs. Chesapeake Hospital Authority estimates that the program will serve 1,900 individuals in its first year of operation, with a goal of a ten percent decrease in discharges from Chesapeake Hospital Authority to state hospitals, as well as a reduction to the City of Chesapeake's police staff's hours spent in the emergency department with psychiatric patients of 20 percent.

This funding is being utilized by Chesapeake Hospital Authority for the following items:

1. Renovation of existing space in the emergency department to create a secure, therapeutic area to house the CPEP, including de-escalation rooms, secure holding rooms, patient beds, group rooms, visiting areas for family members (when appropriate), assessment spaces, and staff offices.
2. Equipment, including office supplies, furnishings, medical equipment, security measures, and IT equipment
3. Hiring of new professional staff
4. First year program operations

DBHDS is currently in the process of reviewing proposals for CPEP programs in both Southwest Virginia and Northern Virginia. DBHDS anticipates allocating and spending the entirety of the \$10 million of this appropriation.