

# Behavioral Health: The Ensuing Pandemic

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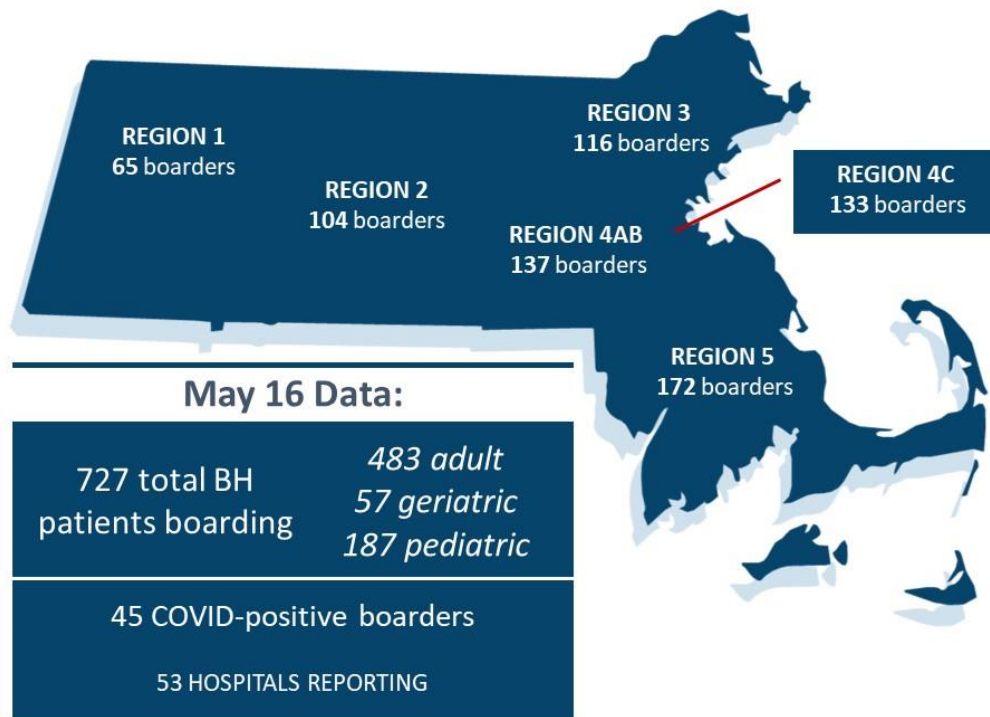
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# A Crisis Within A Crisis

**The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the existing behavioral health (BH) crisis and has led to increased need for BH services.** This has led to:

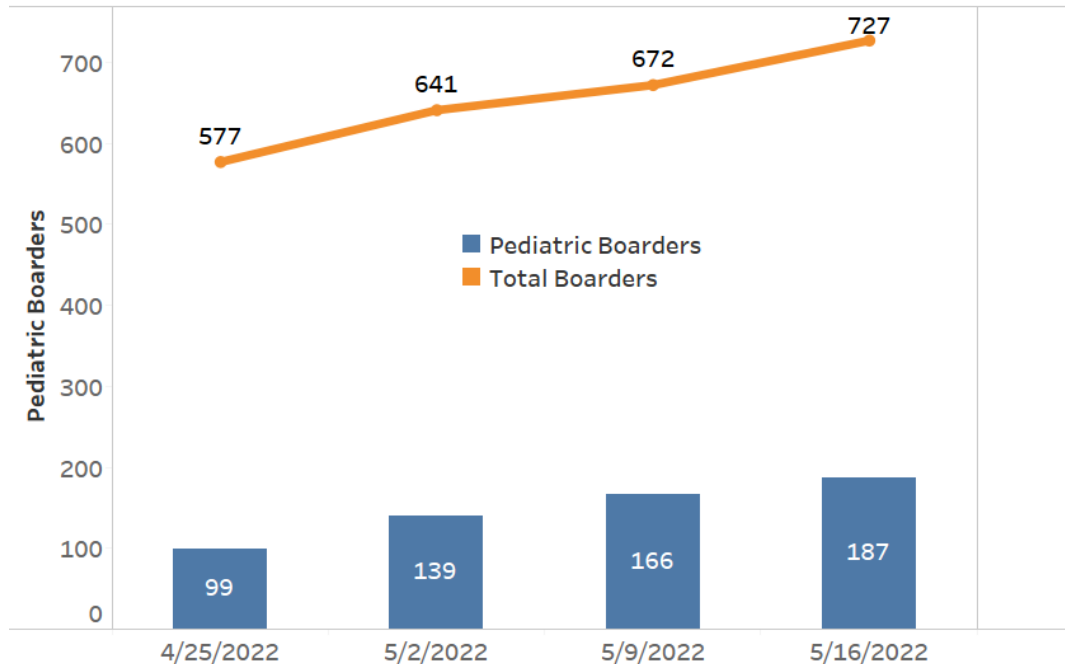
- High behavioral health acuity and greater need for inpatient psychiatric placement.
- Psychiatric units, psychiatric facilities, and community-based behavioral health providers struggling to maintain the workforce to deliver services.
- Difficulty accessing behavioral health services.
- Increased behavioral health boarding in emergency departments (ED) and on acute hospital medical-surgical units.
- Difficulty discharging patients from inpatient psychiatric settings.
- MHA began collecting data earlier in 2021 showing that each Monday there are frequently more than 600 patients boarding in acute care hospitals awaiting inpatient behavioral health placement.

# Behavioral Health Boarding Data



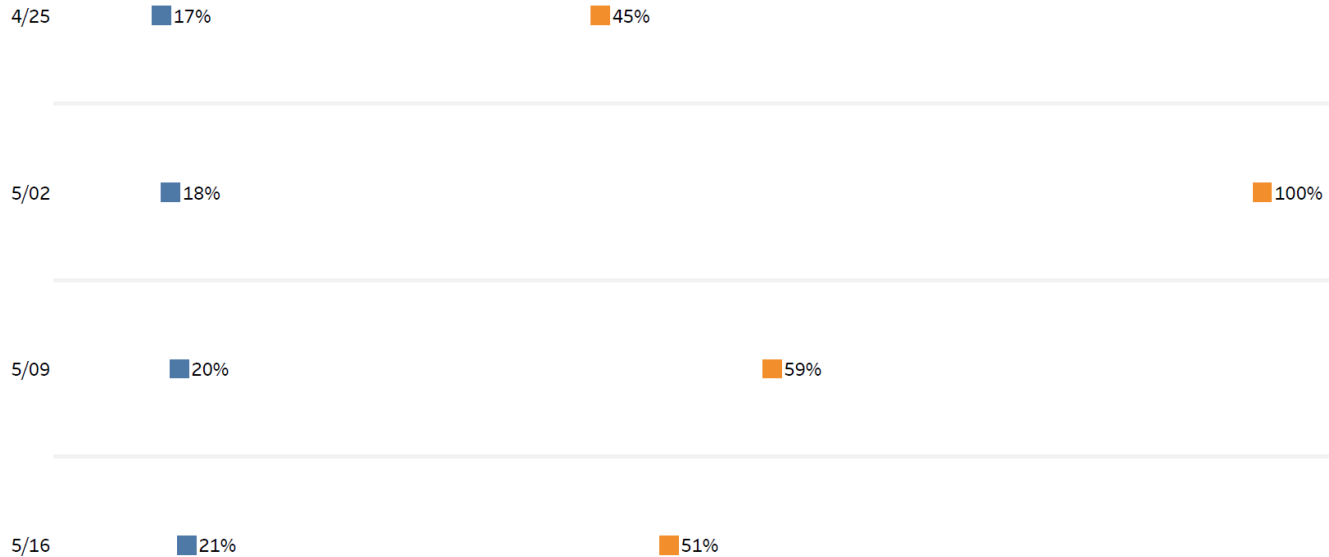
# Behavioral Health Boarding Data

Statewide Total Trend:  
All Boarders and Pediatric Boarders 4/25 - 5/16



# Behavioral Health Boarding Data

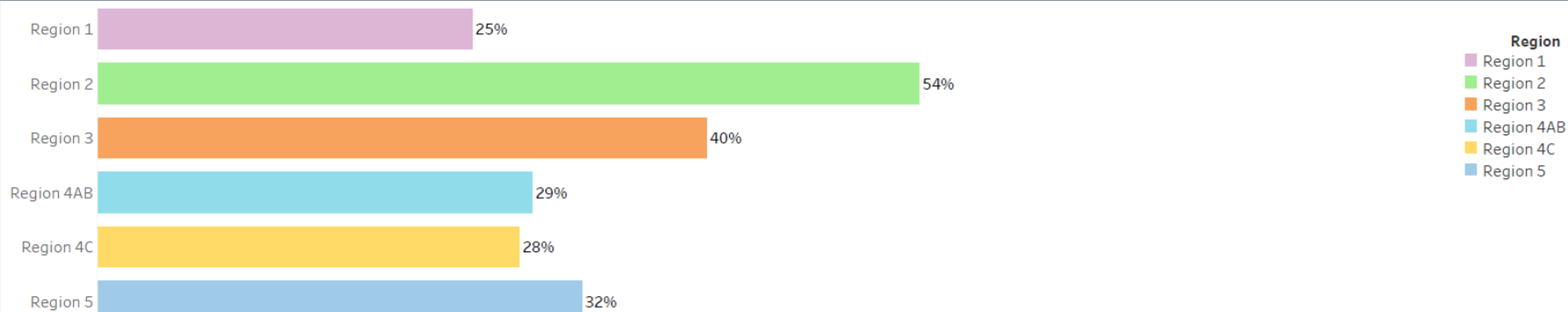
BH Patients Awaiting Psych Evaluation & Boarding in the ED as % of Staffed ED Bed Capacity:  
Statewide Average and Highest Individual Hospital 4/25 - 5/16



■ Average % of ED Beds Occupied by BH Patients Awaiting Psych Eval & Boarding  
■ Hospital with Highest % of ED Beds Occupied by BH Patients Awaiting Psych Eval & Boarding

# Behavioral Health Boarding Data

BH Patients Awaiting Psych Evaluation & Boarding in the ED:  
Peak During the Weeks Covered in This Report as % of Staffed ED Bed Capacity, by MA HMCC Region



Please note that the number of hospitals reporting each week varies and can impact the statewide total. The number of respondents is as follows: 4/25 n=55; 5/2 n=54; 5/9 n=53; 5/16 n=53;

# Behavioral Health Areas of Focus

## Inpatient Psychiatric Beds

- MassHealth capital investments will result in more than 300 new beds over the 2021-2022 calendar years

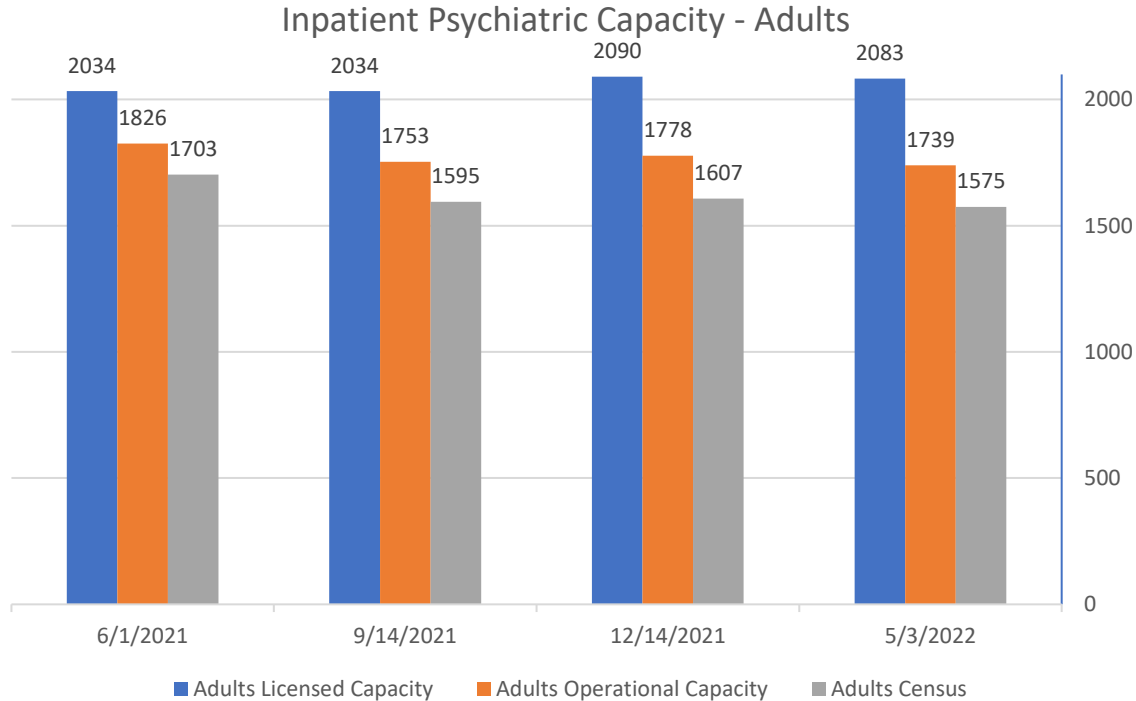
## Financial Stability

- MassHealth supplemental payments to facilities that increase the number of MassHealth inpatient psychiatric bed-days above a pre-COVID baseline
- MassHealth looking to move from the current flat inpatient psychiatric per diem to an acuity-based methodology starting in RY2024/25 with an interim add-on payment in RY2023
- MassHealth announced new resources for acute care hospitals to care for patients while they board
- MHA proposed legislative language to create a Behavioral Health Rate Task Force

## Behavioral Health Workforce

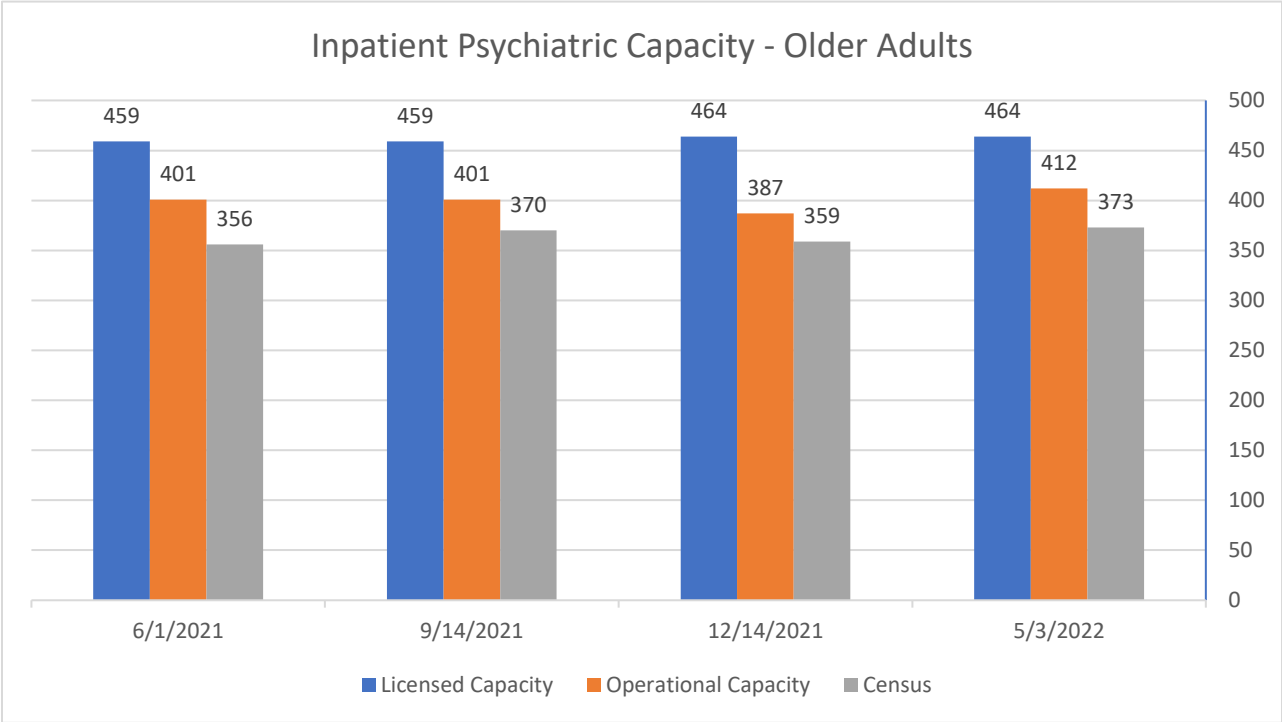
- Baker administration allocated \$31 million in preliminary ARPA funds for inpatient psychiatric workforce
- ARPA legislation dedication an additional \$400 million toward behavioral health, including \$122 million in behavioral health professional loan forgiveness and \$198 million to create a Behavioral Health Trust Fund
- Additional workforce recommendations related to pipeline and training

# MA Inpatient Psychiatric Capacity - Adults

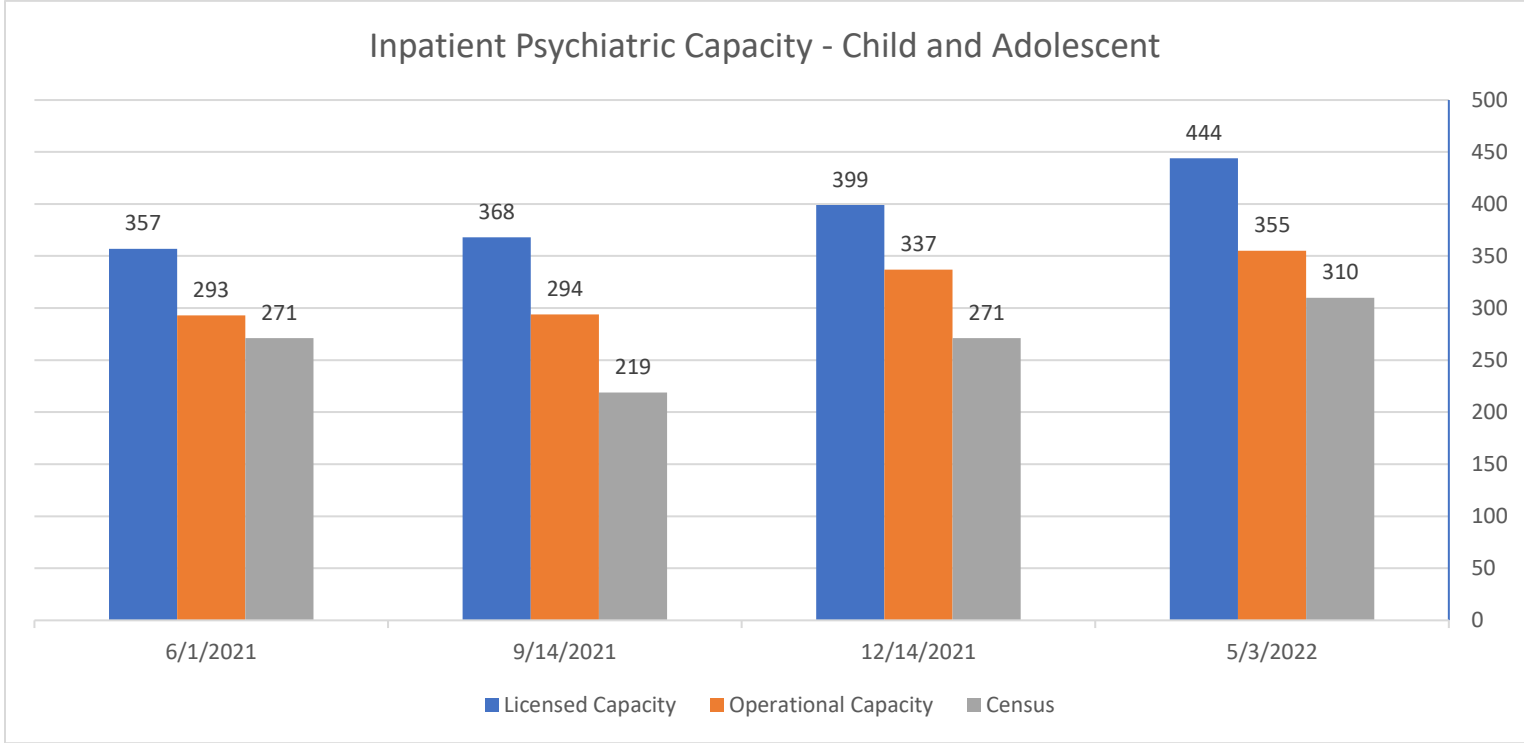




# MA Inpatient Psychiatric Capacity – Older Adults



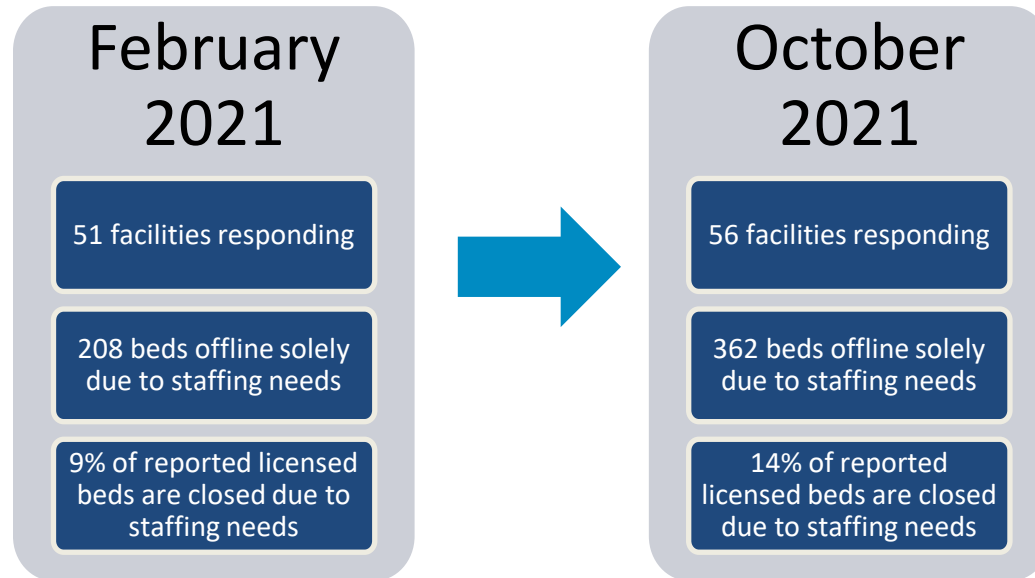
# MA Inpatient Psychiatric Capacity – Child and Adolescent



# Beds Offline Solely Due to Staffing Needs

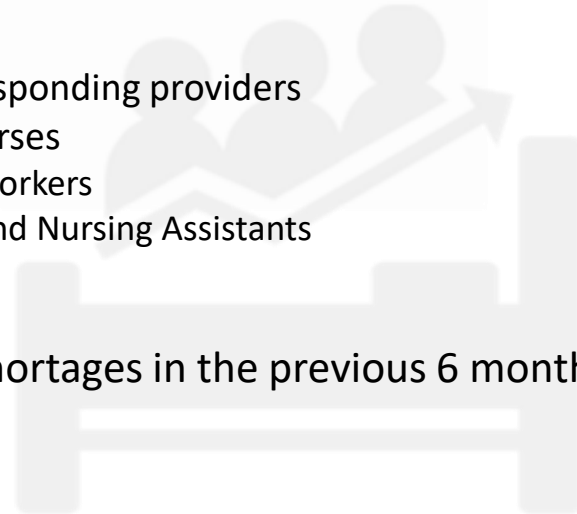
To assess the effect of staffing shortages on the inpatient mental health system, MHA and the Massachusetts Association of Behavioral Health Systems (MABHS) conducted a survey to gauge the staffing needs of inpatient psychiatric units.

Psychiatric units and hospitals were asked for the number of beds they have offline solely due to staffing needs; beds may also be closed due to increased acuity requiring additional staffing and COVID-related infection control measures, both of which have additional staffing effects but were not included in this survey.



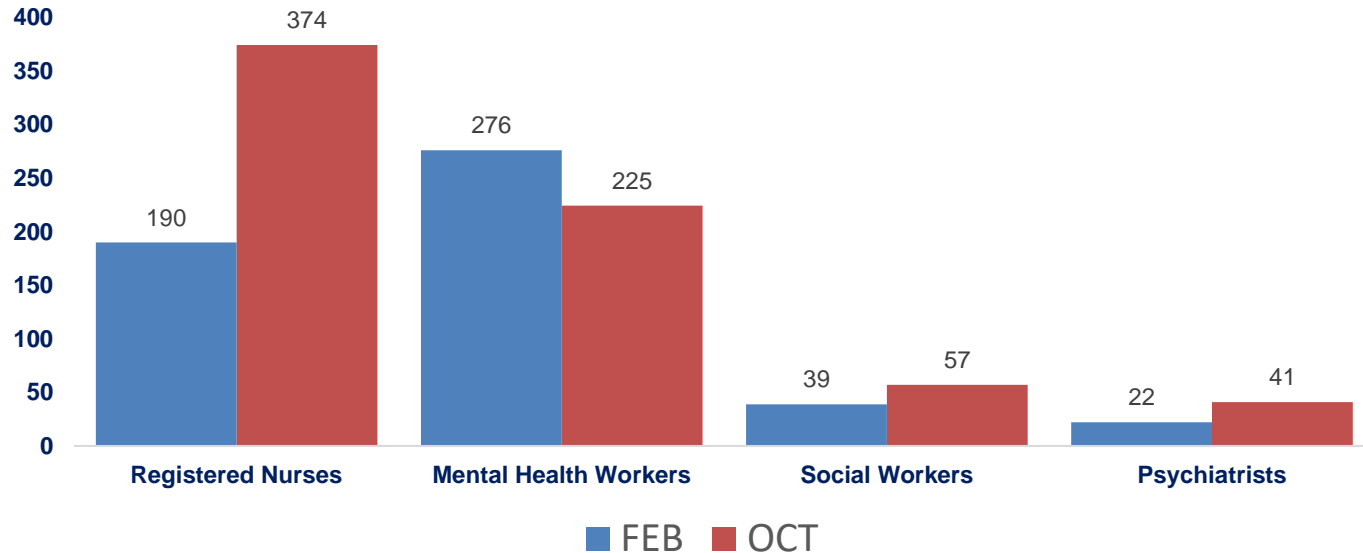
# Inpatient Mental Health Staffing Shortages

- **February 2021:** Highest staffing needs amongst responding providers
  - 100% reported shortages in Mental Health Workers
  - 86% reported shortages in Registered Nurses
  - 81% reported shortages in Psychiatrists and Social Workers
  - 72% reported shortages in Sitters/Patient Care Assistants (PCAs)
- **October 2021:** Highest staffing needs amongst responding providers
  - 96% reported shortages in Registered Nurses
  - 78% reported shortages in Mental Health Workers
  - 67% reported shortages in Social Workers and Nursing Assistants
  - 63% reported shortages in Psychiatrists
- 96% of respondents experienced increased shortages in the previous 6 months



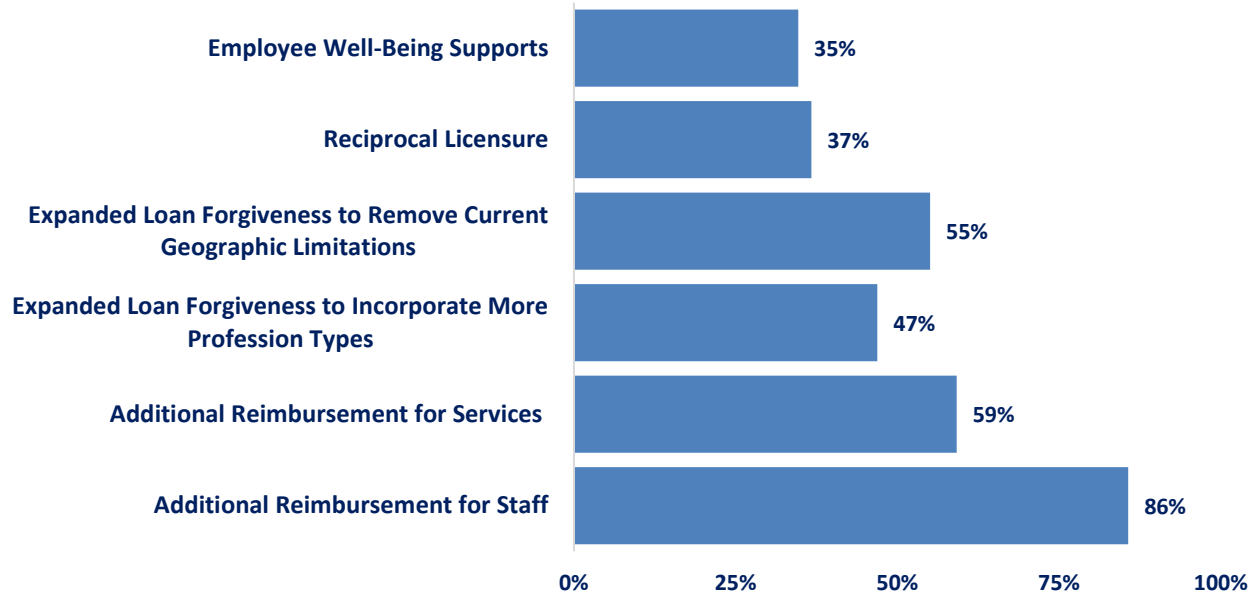
# Inpatient Mental Health Staffing Shortages

TRENDS IN FULL TIME EMPLOYEE (FTEs) NEEDS FOR REPORTED SHORTAGES



# Reported Workforce Resource Needs

## SUPPORT NEEDED TO ATTRACT/RETAIN STAFF



# Additional Behavioral Health Workforce Recommendations/Potential Uses of BH Trust Fund

## Expansion of Current Workforce Initiatives

- Loan forgiveness/scholarships to behavioral health workers who do not require advanced degrees
- Loan forgiveness to clinicians outside HRSA shortage areas

## Behavioral Health Training

- Behavioral health training for health system-based caregivers in behavioral health competencies
- Training for non-health-system-based caregivers (group homes, post acute care, etc.) in behavioral health competencies to keep to manage acuity, appropriately keep patients where they are

## Reimbursement

- In transition to move inpatient psychiatric reimbursement to an acuity-based methodology to better reflect cost of care, methodology should allow facilities to better reimburse staff

## Other Recommendations

- Partnership with colleges/universities for mental health worker pipeline
- Retroactive credentialing for commercial plans
- Allow Physician Assistants to permanently admit patients to psychiatric facilities and authorize restraints and seclusion, in line with current authority under the Public Health Emergency and similar abilities afforded APRNs in Chapter 260 of the Acts of 2021
- Medicaid GME for psychiatrists

# Additional Initiatives, Proposals, Ongoing Needs

MHA – PPAL Pediatric Boarding Best Practices

Inpatient Psychiatric Specialing Payment

Other Boarding Initiatives

- DMH ED diversion program
- MBHP virtual pediatric partial hospitalization program



# Additional Initiatives, Proposals, Ongoing Needs (cont.)

## EOHHS ED – Emergency Services Programs (ESP) Redesign

- MassHealth will shortly restart conversations on their proposal to redesign the delivery of behavioral health services currently delivered by ESPs in EDs so that the hospital would be responsible for delivering these services themselves or subcontracting for these services.

## EOHHS Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform

- Community Behavioral Health Centers
- Behavioral Health Urgent Care
- Behavioral Health Access Line

## Continuum of Care/Throughput Challenges

- Discharging patients with state agency involvement
- Discharging patients to Skilled Nursing Facilities
- DMH continuing care beds at Worcester Recovery Center
- Proposal for additional continuing care beds