

State Proposes \$150 Million Investment in Mental Health, BadgerCare

Written by GOV Press Wisconsin
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<http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/badgercare-save-caw-s5.png>



Governor invests in kids and families, farmers, veterans, folks with substance use disorders, uninsured or underinsured Wisconsinites, and those experiencing mental health crises.

MADISON - Gov. Tony Evers today announced his 2021-23 budget will invest more than \$150 million in increasing access to care, strengthening student mental health support, expanding telehealth accessibility, addressing substance use disorders and the opioid crisis, and ensuring every Wisconsinite has access to affordable, accessible healthcare through expanding BadgerCare.



“Mental and behavioral healthcare is healthcare. Period. From our kids to our farmers, to veterans and those working to overcome substance use disorders, mental health support must be a priority for the health, safety, and well-being of our state,” said Gov. Evers. “The COVID-19 pandemic has only further exacerbated the need for and underscored the urgency of making sure we have affordable, accessible services available to folks when they need it most, and that’s why it’s a top priority in our budget.”

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As a part of this comprehensive proposal, the governor's budget will expand BadgerCare which would provide affordable health insurance coverage to tens of thousands of uninsured Wisconsinites, improving access to mental and behavioral health services while improving health outcomes and drawing down billions in federal funding for healthcare, recapturing billions in federal taxes paid by Wisconsin residents, and biennially producing an estimated \$634 million in state tax dollar savings.

Additionally, the governor's proposal includes an initiative to expand healthcare affordability and accessibility, especially for those who live in areas where shortages of physicians and healthcare specialists exist by reducing barriers to telehealth services. The governor's Telehealth Initiative will provide coverage parity by prohibiting insurers from denying coverage for telehealth services if that service, when in person, is covered by an individual's insurance; prohibiting insurers from charging a patient for a telehealth consultation an amount that exceeds what the insurer would charge for the equivalent in-person consultation; and prohibiting insurers from imposing a separate annual or lifetime limit on telehealth services.

In addition to funding mental health initiatives, the governor's budget includes a plan to reform crisis intervention and emergency detention practices as the current crisis response structure is inefficient, time-consuming for law enforcement, and is not best serving those individuals experiencing a behavior health crisis. This plan will help vulnerable Wisconsinites experiencing a crisis receive care quickly and safely by strategically investing in initiatives that will boost front-end preventative services, the funding of regional crisis centers, and alternatives to emergency detention like rapid response mental health teams.

In total, the Gov. Tony Evers is proposing a more than \$150 million in expanding access and affordability for mental healthcare for Wisconsinites, including:

Increasing Access to Care- More than \$46 million over the biennium

- Expanding BadgerCare to extend reliable and affordable coverage to folks who lack access to needed mental health services and treatment;
- Ensuring that folks with private insurance have access to telehealth services, including telepsychiatry, by adopting a telehealth parity law;
- Investing more than \$40 million into Medicaid rates to bolster access to access to outpatient mental health services, substance use disorder treatment, and child-adolescent day treatment psychiatric services – all services critical to preventing mental and behavioral health crises and suicidal ideation;
- Providing funding to expand the Medicaid Psychosocial Rehabilitation Benefit to improve access to the continuum of behavioral health care and improve outcomes;
- Funding a new behavioral health treatment program to ensure folks who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind have access to critical and more effective healthcare services;
- Funding Behavioral Health Technology Grants to assist Wisconsin providers in integrating emerging technologies to improve healthcare delivery and health information exchange;

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- Expanding the Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program to support veterans who may have a mental health condition or substance use disorder, as well as promote suicide prevention and awareness amongst traditionally underserved veteran populations; and
- As previously announced, providing funding for the Farmer Mental Health Assistance program and creating a Regional Farmer Mental Health Support Program to strengthen outreach and mental health services for Wisconsin's farm families.

Strengthening Student Mental Health Supports- More than \$55 million over the biennium

- Investing more than \$54 million in student mental health and wellness through aid to public schools, grants, and DPI programming in order to meet the growing mental health needs of Wisconsin youth; and
- Expanding the Child Psychiatry Consultation Program to cover the entire state.

Addressing Substance Use Disorders and the Opioid Crisis- More than \$25 million over the biennium

- Funding to expand BadgerCare to cover room and board costs for Wisconsinites receiving treatment in residential substance use disorder treatment facilities;
- Authorizing and funding Medicaid reimbursement for acupuncture services to ensure Wisconsinites have access to alternative methods for managing chronic pain;
- Increasing Medicaid rates for Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) to bolster access to medications, counseling, and behavioral therapies associated with this "whole-patient" approach to treating substance use disorders;
- Additionally, providing \$1.5 million to fund Medication-Assisted Treatment Grants aimed at supporting treatment centers, mobile treatment services, and a tribal MAT provider seeking to meet the recovery needs of Wisconsin's tribal communities;
- Providing funding for Substance Use Harm Reduction Grants to support strategies aimed at reducing harm to those affected by substance use disorder, such as needle exchanges, peer support and recovery coaches, NARCAN Direct, among others;
- Funding to support the deployment of a Methamphetamine Addiction Treatment Training Program designed to promote best practices in treating folks affected by methamphetamine addiction; and
- Providing resources to support the procurement of an Addiction Treatment Platform that offers location, assessment and standards information to improve patient access to addiction

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treatment facilities.

Reforming Crisis Intervention & Emergency Detention- More than \$25 million over the biennium

- Provide funding to support the multiple Regional Crisis Centers that would provide crisis urgent care;
- Funding to support multiple Regional Crisis Stabilization Facilities to support a community-based treatment approach that aims to reduce the need for future intensive care;
- Increasing funding for the Crisis Intervention Training Grant program to provide enhanced training for law enforcement regarding situations involving mental health crises;
- Funding to support additional staff for county and peer-run respite center crisis phone lines;
- Providing funding to support a new Emergency Response Collaboration Grant to establish collaboration programs between local law enforcement and behavioral healthcare providers to simultaneously respond to 911 calls;
- Funding to support Milwaukee County Crisis Mobile and Trauma Response Teams to support a expand response to behavioral health crisis without law enforcement; and
- Funding to support a Behavioral Health Bed Tracker to provide “real-time” in-patient, peer respite, and crisis stabilization capacity and bed availability to reduce logistical challenges and improve the medical clearance process.