



January 23, 2025

On Jan. 15, Gov. JB Pritzker and the Illinois Children's Behavioral Health Transformation Initiative (CBHTI) announced the public launch of BEACON (Behavioral Health Care and Ongoing Navigation), the centralized resource portal for Illinois youth and families seeking services for behavioral health needs, including state agency support and community-based programs.

Guided by member feedback on youth boarding in hospital settings, IHA and hospital leaders have worked closely with the Governor's Office over the last two years on development of BEACON's pilot portal, and the parameters of the permanent portal that was built by Google Public Sector. This has been a key part of a broader effort by IHA to collaborate with statewide partners to address hospital boarding solutions and resources for behavioral health patient discharge planning.

Following the public release of the portal, we strongly encourage members to share the BEACON portal among hospital administrators and clinicians, especially emergency department and inpatient psychiatric unit staff.

Specifically, the BEACON portal can be shared by hospitals with parents or guardians of youth in order to:

- Obtain information about a range of services, from a simple listing of available programs offered by the state, to community-based services in their area;
- Seek assistance of a Resource Coordinator, who can help identify additional resources for children in need;
- Obtain access to Parent Navigators who can provide further assistance, particularly in connecting families to school-based services; and
- Have a Resource Coordinator refer complex cases to a Clinical Specialist to coordinate those services and facilitate communication with the child's caregivers, like youth in a hospital who need state assistance gaining access to another level of care.

BEACON users are provided with information about available behavioral health services for children and adolescents, centralizing resources from the following Illinois agencies:

- Dept. of Human Services;
- Dept. of Children and Family Services;
- State Board of Education;
- Dept. of Public Health;
- Dept. of Healthcare and Family Services; and
- Dept. of Juvenile Justice.

The public announcement follows the discussion around BEACON's capabilities between Illinois' Chief Officer for Children's Behavioral Health Transformation, Dana Weiner, and IHA's Board of Trustees in early 2024. Hospitals, schools, and state agencies began using the new, permanent BEACON portal last fall, and now will be able to share the resource more broadly for prevention and early intervention efforts with patients' families and guardians.

Examples of new ways hospitals may promote BEACON use include outpatient settings, at community events, and within hospitals' public informational and educational resources. Hospitals can also continue to engage with the portal directly to seek support for patients who may be at risk of boarding in the emergency department or acute care settings, and who need coordinated support and access to state resources. Cases will remain open in BEACON until a child has been connected to an

appropriate resource. The parent or caregiver will remain informed at each step along the way.

Focusing on youth placement following hospitalization, IHA has also worked closely with the Governor's Office and the Illinois Dept. of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to strongly encourage new youth residential behavioral health bed availability and track progress of this expansion. This month, DCFS provided IHA with an update on new youth residential beds that came online in 2024, which include 35 new beds across the state, with access focused on youth with developmental disabilities, medically complex needs, high behavioral health acuity, and individuals involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

For more information about the broader CBHTI that spurred this effort, [click here](#). IHA will continue to stay in close contact with Chief Weiner's team and update members on developments related to the state transformation work. For questions or comments related to this memo, please [contact us](#).

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