

W/B HIDTA Treatment and Prevention Spotlight

Behavioral Health System
Baltimore, Inc.



Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Inc. (BHSB) is a nonprofit organization within Baltimore City that manages the City's behavioral health system, a network of care for substance use and mental health disorders. BHSB's mission is to develop, implement, and align resources, programs, and policies that support the behavioral health and wellness of individuals, families, and communities. In pursuit of its mission, BHSB allocates resources towards substance use disorder treatment providers. Funding from the Washington-Baltimore HIDTA supports their partnership with Baltimore City's Adult Drug Treatment Court (DTC) through peer support (individuals with lived experience with substance use and recovery who are trained and certified) and high-quality clinical care coordination with the goals of improving treatment compliance and outcomes. Tuerk House, a substance use disorder treatment center and key partner of BHSB, plays a crucial role in this work by providing staff members who work closely with program participants, providing support and helping them through treatment and recovery.

A critical component of the DTC program is employment support. BHSB Associate Director of Special Populations Taliesha Abeokuto stated that, "I am most proud of how invested our team is in finding employment for participants and connecting them to the community." Employment for those in recovery from substance use disorder is associated with reductions in recidivism and improved quality of life.¹ Strong relationships with community members and training programs help the program successfully connect participants with employment. 31% of current participants are gainfully employed – meaning they have stable employment that can support themselves and their families.

Two career development opportunities stand out. VETWorkS is a training program that focuses on electrical vehicle certification. Two participants have already completed this training program. Another opportunity is working to become certified peers, with six participants currently being trained to become peers.

¹Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Substance Use Disorders Recovery with a Focus on Employment and Education. HHS Publication No. PEP21-PL-Guide-6 Rockville, MD: National Mental Health and Substance Use Policy Laboratory. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2021.

A new incentive for completing treatment, “The A Team”, was introduced in the fall. This incentive utilizes a white board in the court room, where participants can be designated as being on “The A Team” if they meet the requirements (attending treatment, no positive drug screens, etc.). After three weeks on the board, participants have the opportunity to win a small reward. Almost 300 participants have been designated so far. The public recognition – in conjunction with committed staff including a peer and judges who spend dedicated time with participants – makes participants feel valued and recognized.



(Drug Treatment Court Team from BHSB, Tuerk House, and Baltimore City Court)

As one of the first programs in Maryland to infuse peers into drug treatment court in 2019, BHSB has been a pioneer. BHSB Director for Special Populations Daniel Jarvis noted that before funding from the Washington-Baltimore HIDTA there was not enough capacity to serve all participants entering the Baltimore City Adult Drug Treatment Court. He stated, “Successes discussed do not happen without these funds.” Quickly after inception, other courts began to inquire about integrating their own peer recovery specialist, inspired by the success at BHSB. Washington-Baltimore HIDTA Deputy Director for Treatment and Prevention Dr. Lora Peppard stated, “Our HIDTA is committed to reducing the demand for substances and building a culture of recovery and well-being in Baltimore City. We are thankful to BHSB and Tuerk House for bringing these services to such an important community.”