

# 2022 Highlights of Pennsylvania's Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board



## ***Programs, Activities, and Supports***

The Department of Health (Department) formed the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Advisory Board (Board) in 2000 to support the responsibilities essential to the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) Planning and Implementation Grant process, which became the Administration for Community Living (ACL) TBI State Partnership Grant. The Board is comprised of a variety of stakeholders representing State agencies and offices; TBI programs and providers; as well as individuals who have sustained a TBI, their family members, and caregivers. The Department has continued to support the Board while utilizing HRSA Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant and ACL funding for other brain injury programming.

### **Pennsylvania Statistics:**

- 543,288 people in PA living with brain injury related disabilities.
- 17,107 citizens, age 19 or younger, have sports-related brain injuries, with over 15,000 seen in the ER in Pennsylvania.
- 138,600 new injuries sustained by adults and children each year.
- More than 85% of all TBIs involve lack of seatbelts, improper fit of a helmet, use of alcohol and drugs or falls (especially in older adults).

*BIAPA (2021)*

### **Leading Causes of TBI:**

- 47% Falls
- 15% Struck by or Against an object
- 14% Traffic Accidents
- 9% Assaults
- 8% Unknown
- 7% Other

*CDC (2021)*

### **Is TBI Preventable?**

More than 85% of all TBIs can be prevented as shown by the following:

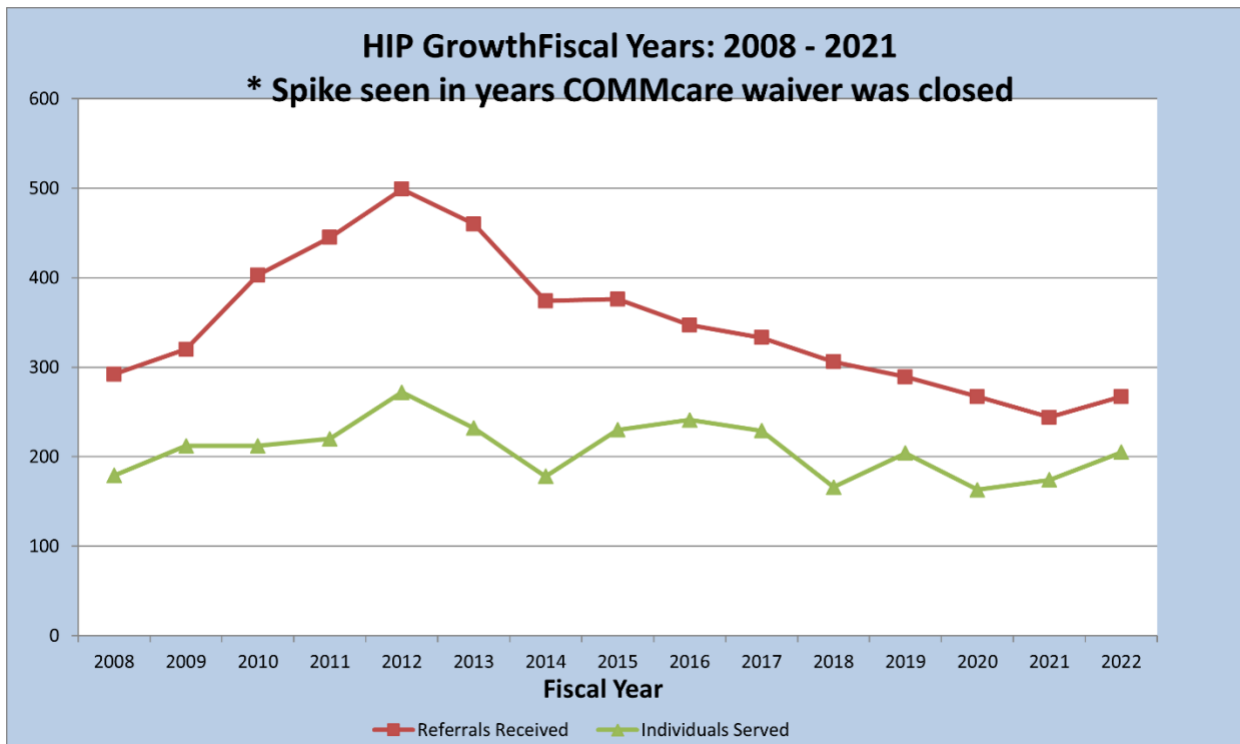
- Seat belts are 57% effective in preventing traumatic and fatal brain injuries.
- Properly fitted helmets reduce the risk of brain injuries by 88%.
- Over half of all brain injuries are related to alcohol and drug abuse.
- Nearly 20% of all older adult falls result in a brain injury.

**HEAD INJURY PROGRAM**

The Department’s Head Injury Program (HIP) was created in 1988 by the Emergency Medical Services Act of 1985. The goal of the program is to help individuals with a TBI live as independently as possible in their homes and communities by providing funding for qualified individuals to receive head injury rehabilitation services. Enrolled individuals may receive up to 12 months or \$100,000 for rehabilitation services, followed by a maximum of six consecutive months or \$1,000 for case management to assist with transition out of the HIP. In December 2018, the age limit to apply for the HIP was decreased from 21 to 18 years of age.

HIP funding increased from \$4.1 million in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2020/2021 to \$4.3 million in SFY 2021/2022. In SFY 2022/2023, the approved budget was decreased to \$4.2 million. Per House Bill 1459, \$250,000 of the HIP budget is to be allocated to Emergency Responder Mental Wellness and Stress Management. Therefore, 3.95 million will be used for the HIP in SFY 2022/2023.

Referencing the chart below, **there were a total of 205 individuals served in SFY 2022**, which increased from SFY 2021. Providers continue to experience staffing issues, which led to limits on residential, outpatient and home and community-based services. Although program growth stagnated in SFY 2021, it improved in SFY 2022. In August of 2021, individuals in need of additional rehabilitation were considered for re-enrollment into the program. Since August of 2021, 22 individuals were approved for re-enrollments to receive additional rehabilitation.



**ADMINISTRATION FOR COMMUNITY LIVING (ACL) GRANTS**

In 2022, the Department continued its work on ACL’s TBI State Implementation Partnership Grant. This is a five-year grant that began on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 and is set to end on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026. The

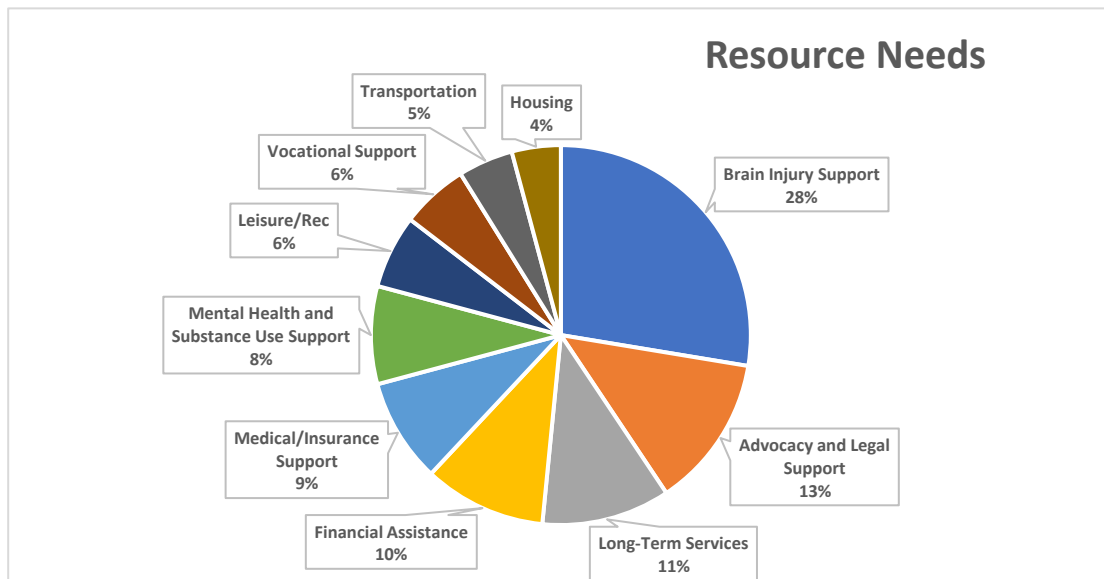
Department has four focus areas for this grant: NeuroResource Facilitation, Intersectionality of Intimate Partner Violence and TBI, Juvenile Justice, and Older Adults. In March of 2022, ACL awarded the Department supplemental funding to expand the public health work force. The Department focused these funds on expanding the NeuroResource Facilitation Program to identify and address the service and support gaps caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding will end September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

### ***NeuroResource Facilitation Program (NRFP)***

The Department partnered with the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania (BIAPA) to implement the NRFP. This program focuses on helping PA residents with a TBI, ages 18 and older, and their family members to identify, navigate, and access brain injury resources, services and supports in their local area. The goal of the program is to maximize the health, independence, and overall well-being of individuals with a TBI statewide.

To ensure individuals are able to access the needed services and supports in their geographical location, they are assigned a NeuroResource Facilitator (NRF) located in their region. The NRFP covers the Northeast, Southeast, West, and Central regions of the Commonwealth. At the request of the enrolled individuals, the services were primarily provided virtually or over the phone. In-person meetings did occur upon request and proper safety precautions were taken. In May of 2022, the Department was given permission by ACL to enroll individuals with a non-traumatic brain injury (nTBI) into the NRFP. From April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, the NRFP received 78 referrals.

In reference to the chart below, NRFs provided a variety of resources to enrolled individuals. The most needed resource was brain injury support, which includes treatment, support groups, and training.



### ***COVID-19 NeuroResource Facilitation***

The Department partnered with BIAPA to expand the NRFP to identify the service and support gaps caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and address them. The Department and BIAPA conducted two focus groups with individuals with a brain injury and caregivers to better understand how the pandemic impacted their service and support needs. The following gaps were identified:

1. Social Isolation
2. Access to quality and timely healthcare

3. Employment
4. Compounding symptoms
5. COVID-19 Information

To address the identified gaps, the following actions were taken:

- A bi-monthly support group for individuals with a brain injury that contracted the COVID-19 virus was established and is co-facilitated by two NRFs.
- A series of informational articles relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, accessing healthcare, advocacy in regard to healthcare needs, and safety precautions to prevent exposure was developed and will be disseminated in the BIAPA monthly newsletter.
- A public health emergency preparedness plan will be developed in 2023 to provide individuals with a brain injury and their caregivers information on where to access current and accurate information about public health emergencies, where to find resources to combat the emergency, resources to ensure service and support gaps do not occur, and where to find peer support.

### ***Intersectionality of Intimate Partner Violence and Brain Injury***

The Department continued its partnership with Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV) to focus on the intersectionality between intimate partner violence (IPV) and TBI. The purpose is to strengthen the response to domestic violence (DV) survivors who may have a brain injury by providing education, outreach, technical assistance, and screening tools to professionals working with the IPV population.

PCADV developed a baseline survey to assess current TBI knowledge and needs of DV shelters. The survey was sent to each of the 59 DV shelters across the Commonwealth for completion. To gain additional knowledge and perspective of the survey results, PCADV coordinated six focus groups of 37 DV programs representing communities in suburban, urban, and rural areas. As a result of the focus groups, it was found many of the DV shelters were:

- Unable to accurately screen for a TBI because they did not feel comfortable using the HELPS screening tool.
- Limited in their ability to identify the signs and symptoms of brain injury; were unable to provide information on brain injury-specific services and resources to assist individuals with accessing appropriate care.
- Limited in their partnerships with medical providers and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) providers coming in contact with individuals experiencing DV.
- Limited in their ability to assist individuals to feel more comfortable with disclosing to medical professionals the signs and symptoms of a brain injury they are exhibiting.

To address survey and focus group results, PCADV took the following actions:

- Began the development of an education and outreach program targeted to DV agencies and human service providers as well as a technical assistance manual/tool kit for individuals working with the IPV population.
- Conducted outreach to EMS providers to form partnerships between DV programs and EMS providers across the state; developing a resource infographic and QR code for each county in the state that lists ten resources people can access if they need assistance, including the DV hotline, the Brain Injury Resource Line, mental health services, substance use services, developmental disability services, county assistance office, and housing.

- Assessing a variety of brain injury screening tools to determine which one would best fit the needs of the DV shelters.
- Provided brain injury training to DV shelter staff.
- Provided information on brain injury resources to DV shelters.

### ***Juvenile Justice Technical Assistance and Training***

The Department continued its partnership with BIAPA to provide training and technical assistance to existing juvenile justice service providers in PA and conduct outreach to additional juvenile justice providers/professionals. The purpose of the outreach was to offer technical assistance including training and consultation related to identifying youth with a history of brain injury through screening, providing/referring for neurocognitive testing, and facilitating potential resources for youth with brain injury.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact the ability to provide outreach activities. With the current labor shortage and the decreased number of juveniles served, many providers did not have the capacity to accept technical assistance. However, assistance was provided virtually and in-person to the following: the Bureau of Juvenile Justice Services, Butler County Probation, Adelphoi Village, George Junior Republic, the Philadelphia Justice Assessment Center, Justice Works, Philadelphia Juvenile Justice Services Center, and the National Partnership for Juvenile Services. Throughout 2022, a total of three trainings were provided to approximately 400 professionals working with the juvenile justice population.

### ***TBI Education, Training, and Outreach for Older Adult Populations***

The Department continued its partnership with BIAPA to provide outreach and training to professionals working within the older adult population. The purpose of the outreach and training is to increase brain injury awareness of the etiology, causes of sustained injuries, and the impact and management of symptoms. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact the ability to provide training and outreach. However, outreach was conducted to Aging Well, the Pennsylvania Department of Aging's Bureau of Protective Services, and Health Care Quality Units. Each entity scheduled multiple trainings for 2023. In 2022, one training was conducted for an audience working exclusively with older adults and 12 trainings were conducted for other human services professionals who are likely to come in contact with individuals with brain injury in the course of their daily work. These included service providers in the mental health system, behavioral health system, those who work with homeless individuals, nurses and first responders. Content about aging with brain injury is included in all trainings. Approximately 123 professionals were provided with training.

### **The Pennsylvania Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) Prevention Program**

The SBS Prevention Program is an injury prevention program supported by the Department. PA Hospitals and birthing centers are required per Act 2001-176, to provide parents with specific educational materials related to the risks and consequences of shaken baby or infant head trauma. The Department oversees the distribution and use of these materials. The Department continues to provide technical assistance and educational materials to hospitals and birthing centers concerning the requirements of Act 2001-176. For additional information:

- **Website:** <http://www.health.pa.gov/shakenbabyprogram>
- **Phone:** 1-717-772-2763

### **BrainSTEPS (Strategies Teaching Educators, Parents, and Students)**

The Department, in partnership with Department of Education and BIAPA, has implemented BrainSTEPS since 2007. BrainSTEPS is a child and adolescent brain injury school re-entry program to assist PA schools in creating appropriate educational plans for students, following a TBI or nTBI. It is comprised of 230+ brain injury consultants serving on regional teams based out of all 29 educational Intermediate Units and two school districts. Anyone can refer a student to the program through the following ways:

- **Website:** <http://www.brainsteps.net>
- **Phone:** 1-724-944-6542

To ensure children and adolescents with a TBI or nTBI receive care in a well-functioning system through high school graduation, BrainSTEPS provides the following supports to students, their families or caregivers, and schools :

- Identification of students with brain injury
- School re-entry planning
- Educational plan development, including IEP/504 Plan support, academic adjustments/ accommodations, and strategy selection
- Teacher, peer, and family training
- Annual monitoring of student until graduation
- Family support and resource sharing
- Return to Learn concussion management
- Facilitation of communication between healthcare provider, school staff, and family

In 2022, BrainSTEPS received a total of 463 referrals and provided 1,880 consultation hours to support 654 students with a TBI or nTBI. BrainSTEPS also targeted outreach and program promotion to families with pre-school and school-aged children, rehabilitation facilities, medical professionals working with the pediatric population, and community organizations and agencies that serve primary and secondary school students. BrainSTEPS conducted a total of 32 presentations to a diverse audience of 2,370 participants.

### **Brain Injury and Opioid Training Program**

In January 2022 the Department continued to partner with the BIAPA on the Brain Injury and Opioids Training Program. Additional funding and direction were provided by the Department to expand on work previously conducted on this topic. The Department partnered with BIAPA to develop new training products and awareness materials on the intersection between brain injury and opioids misuse, with a focus on the effects of non-fatal drug overdose. Needs assessments information collected from substance abuse providers and brain injury providers informed the development of materials. Training content includes basic information about:

- Brain injury
- Screening for brain injury
- Factors that impact the response to traditional treatment for those with cognitive impairment
- Suggested ways to adapt interventions to meet the needs of individuals with brain injury
- Brain injury resources

In 2022, BIAPA provided 10 trainings during the six months grant period and has 15 additional trainings scheduled for the first six months of 2023. A new feature of this initiative is “Ask the Expert” Lunch and Learn. Training attendees are invited to join an informal meeting held virtually to provide an opportunity to discuss ways to apply the training to their work with individuals with brain injury. Topics are driven by the attendees. Awareness is conducted in the context of all outreach efforts,

including copies of four fact sheets on the topic. BIAPA developed three print public service announcements on this topic which were approved by the Department were disseminated.

## **Safety and Youth Sports Program**

In 2022, the Department continued their partnership with the Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers Society (PATS) to implement the Safety and Youth Sports Program. This program utilizes Sports Safety International's (SSI) ConcussionWise training courses to inform and educate students participating in or desiring to participate in an athletic activity, their parents, and their coaches about the nature and risk of concussion, including the risks associated with continuing to play or practice after a concussion. Each course is administered by a Certified ConcussionWise Instructor, whom are all Pennsylvania-licensed athletic trainers. Throughout 2022, the Department and PATS worked with SSI to update the ConcussionWise training courses and to create a new course designed for children in elementary school. The ConcussionWise training courses can be viewed in the following ways:

- Emailing [concussiongrantpats@gmail.com](mailto:concussiongrantpats@gmail.com) to schedule a ConcussionWise training
- Downloading PATS Concussion Toolbox App
  - Available in IOS and Android formats by entering "PATS Concussion Toolbox" in the AppStore or Google Play
  - Utilizing the QR codes on the PATS website: <https://www.gopats.org/concussions>

### **Overview of Activities**

- PATS has performed 94 concussion presentations, which has educated 1747 participants including 1562 youth, 148 coaches, and 37 parents.
- PATS currently has 14 PATS ConcussionWise Instructors who are ready to provide in person or virtual ConcussionWise presentations.
- The PATS Concussion Toolbox app has 403 users.

### **Future Goals/Plans:**

- Pursue live and virtual ConcussionWise presentations to coaches, parents, and athletes of youth sports ages 7-21 while adhering to all CDC, Department of Health, Department of Education, and local guidelines.
- Continue to utilize the updated SSI ConcussionWise training courses during this upcoming quarter.
- Host 30 ConcussionWise training sessions in secondary schools and youth sports around the Commonwealth.
- Continue to work with SSI to improve the quality and content of the ConcussionWise training courses to ensure the most up to date information is presented to all parents, coaches and athletes involved in youth sports at all levels within the Commonwealth.
- Collaborate with SSI to incorporate Spanish subtitles into their courses.

## **TBI Advisory Board Workgroups**

The TBI Advisory Board developed a TBI State Action Plan (SAP) to serve as a "blueprint" for addressing gaps in the services and supports for the TBI community. The SAP outlines five goals to assist the Board, interested community collaborators, and policy makers to improve access to appropriate specialized services and supports and increase knowledge and awareness about TBI among children and adults, their families, caregivers, and providers.

In an effort to achieve these goals, the Board created three workgroups to address different areas of focus. Workgroups were designed to bring together individuals with diverse skills and perspectives to collaborate on specific objectives within the plan. Each workgroup was responsible for developing strategies, implementing action steps, and monitoring progress towards accomplishing the overall goals of the action plan.

### ***Education and Resource Facilitation Workgroup***

In 2022, the Education and Resource Facilitation Workgroup primarily focused on Goal 2 of the SAP: **Increase knowledge and public awareness of available opportunities for brain injury resource facilitation.** The workgroup spent this year:

1. Identify the workforce gaps in need of TBI education and resources to support individuals with a brain injury. These gaps include:
  - a. Healthcare providers that do not have the information necessary to make appropriate referrals for people who may have experienced a brain injury.
  - b. Caregivers of individuals with a TBI that need information about supports and available resources.
  - c. Professionals that are likely to come in contact with individuals with a TBI but are limited in their knowledge of brain injury.
2. Recommending updates to the Department's TBI website. The website has undergone some of these changes, including updated information about Department brain injury programs and general brain injury resources. A plan for additional changes was developed and will be carried out in 2023.
3. Developing a standardized training slide deck containing general information about TBI and available resources in PA. This is to ensure information provided is current and reflective of TBI best practices to support impacted individuals. The slide deck will be applicable to all audiences, particularly for people with a brain injury.

### ***Systems Workgroup***

In 2022, the Systems Workgroup primarily focused on Goal 3 of the SAP: **Enhance service and supports systems for individuals with brain injury and their families.** The workgroup spent this year:

1. Developing relationships with other service systems that are providing services and assistance to individuals with brain injury. This includes outreach and providing brain injury training to the Office of Long-Term Living's (OLTL) Managed Care Organizations (MCOs).
2. Consulting with Alabama's Department of Rehabilitation Services to learn how they partnered with their Department of Mental Health to embed training on brain injury and a screening tool for case managers and how to refer individuals, if they do screen positive. Attempts to follow Alabama's efforts and maintain contact will continue in 2023.
3. Met with the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) to provide education on brain injury and discuss a possible collaboration to embed brain injury training and screening for their case managers.
4. Researching other funding options to assist with embedding brain injury training and screening into other services systems.

### ***Health Equity Workgroup***

In 2022, the Health Equity Workgroup primarily focused on Goal 4 of the SAP: **Increase knowledge and awareness of the Pennsylvania TBI Advisory Board to increase**



**stakeholder diversity and representation and to foster greater collaboration.** The workgroup spent this year:

1. Analyzing the results of the Board Composition Survey and developing a comprehensive list of demographics that are not represented on the Board
2. Developing a one-page recruitment flyer to assist with recruiting new board members that lack representation on the Board.
3. Identifying guest speakers to educate the Board. As a result of the Board Composition Survey, the workgroup recognized the need for training on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). The workgroup assisted in the coordination of the DEI training that occurred at the November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Board meeting.
4. Developing a Board application and application process to assist with recruitment and retainment efforts. This work will continue in 2023

### **Department of Human Services, Office of Long-Term Living: CHC Waiver**

CHC is a Medicaid managed care program that was developed to enhance access to and improve coordination of physical health benefits and long-term services and supports (LTSS) and to create a person driven, long term support system in which people with physical disabilities have choice, control, and access to a full array of quality services that provide independence, health, and quality of life. The goal of CHC is to serve more people in the community in order to give them the opportunity to live independently, work, and spend more time with their families. LTSS help eligible individuals to perform activities in their home such as bathing, dressing, preparing meals, administering medications and to remain involved in their community. The following individuals may be eligible to qualify for CHC:

- Individuals who are 21 years of age or older and dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid.
- Individuals who are 21 years of age or older and eligible for Medicaid (LTSS) because they need the level of care provided by a nursing facility.
- Individuals currently enrolled in the LIFE Program only if they expressly select to transition from LIFE to a CHC MCO.

The following individuals are **not** eligible for CHC:

- Individuals receiving long-term services and supports through the OBRA waiver and are not nursing facility eligible.
- Individuals who do not meet the Medicaid financial eligibility criteria.
- Individuals who reside in a state veteran's home.

In 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to cause significant barriers to CHC participants with a TBI receiving services, their families, and service providers. As a COVID-19 prevention measure, many congregate settings continued to be closed. Some have since began the process of reopening. To mitigate any possible health and safety risk to the participants attending those programs that could not provide a safe gathering space, services continued to be provided in their homes. As service needs increased, the staff available to provide those services decreased. Providers faced ongoing staff shortages, which created numerous hurdles to provide critical services daily. These staffing issues impacted the whole continuum of health care services for participants at the state level and nationally. OLTL, the CHC MCOs, and service providers stepped up to meet participants' needs. OLTL allowed some services to be provided virtually and partnered with MCOs to maximize the number of vaccinated

participants through outreach, education, and hosting vaccination clinics. OLTL also worked to disburse and monitor the American Rescue Care Plan Act (ARPA) funds to some providers in the CHC program.

The MCOs participating in CHC include:

- AmeriHealth Caritas
  - Website: [www.amerihealthcaritaschc.com](http://www.amerihealthcaritaschc.com)
  - Phone: 1-855-235-5115 (TTY 1-800-235-5112)
  
- PA Health and Wellness
  - Website: [www.PAHealthWellness.com](http://www.PAHealthWellness.com)
  - Phone: 1-844-626-6813 (TTY 1-844-349-8916)
  
- UPMC Community HealthChoices
  - Website: [www.upmchealthplan.com/chc](http://www.upmchealthplan.com/chc)
  - Phone: 1-844-833-0523 (TTY 711)
  
- Keystone First
  - Website: [www.keystonefirstchc.com](http://www.keystonefirstchc.com)
  - Phone: 1-855-332-0729 (TTY 1-855-235-4976)

OLTL will continue to provide information about relevant CHC topics through various means on specific topics, narrated training segments and statewide provider assistance events. Information on CHC is located on DHS's website at: [www.HealthChoices.pa.gov](http://www.HealthChoices.pa.gov). OLTL continues to provide ongoing CHC updates at stakeholder's meetings and other webinars as requested. OLTL has both a Provider and Participant Helpline as resource information contacts. The following resources are available:

## RESOURCE INFORMATION

CHC LISTSERV // STAY INFORMED: <http://listserv.dpw.state.pa.us/oltl-community-healthchoices.html>

COMMUNITY HEALTHCHOICES WEBSITE: [www.healthchoices.pa.gov](http://www.healthchoices.pa.gov)

MLTSS SUBMAAC WEBSITE:

[www.dhs.pa.gov/communitypartners/informationforadvocatesandstakeholders/mltss](http://www.dhs.pa.gov/communitypartners/informationforadvocatesandstakeholders/mltss)

EMAIL COMMENTS TO: [RA-PWCHC@pa.gov](mailto:RA-PWCHC@pa.gov)

OLTL PROVIDER LINE: 1-800-932-0939

OLTL PARTICIPANT LINE: 1-800-757-5042

INDEPENDENT ENROLLMENT BROKER: 1-844-824-3655 or (TTY 1-833-254-0690)

or visit [www.enrollchc.com](http://www.enrollchc.com)



## **Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania (BIAPA)**

***Brain Injury Resource Line (BIRL)***

The BIRL is maintained by the BIAPA. It is designed to provide resource information to all callers. In 2022, BIRL received 346 new calls. The BIRL is staffed by trained volunteers that work as a team and continue to use the online resource manual that was developed and implemented last year. This manual is in a database format that allows for editing in real time in a dynamic fashion, eliminating the need for updating versions. New sections and resources are added regularly. BIRL volunteers participate in ongoing training and mentoring to increase their capacity to assist callers. They participate in quarterly virtual meetings and attend an in-person training annually at the BIAPA conference.

### ***Support Groups***

As highlighted in previous years, brain injury support groups are the front-line tools of affiliation for individuals with brain injury and their families. BIAPA maintains contact with these support groups to provide information and support as needed and works with individuals to start new groups in the communities where they live.

Due to ongoing concerns and restrictions resulting from COVID-19, most community-based local support groups did not hold in-person meetings in 2022, but many offered virtual meetings. Some groups are beginning to return to in-person meetings, some continue to meet virtually, and some have been discontinued all together. A listing of groups, including how they meet, is posted on the BIAPA website. A link to the list is included in the BIAPA e-newsletter each month. There are currently 35 local support groups listed.

BIAPA continues to offer a statewide virtual support group for survivors and their supporters that meets monthly and plans to continue this indefinitely. A new group, "Coping with COVID," was implemented in December 2022 to support individuals with brain injury and their supporters who are struggling with COVID-related issues. BIAPA is implementing a Caregiver Support group in 2023 that will meet virtually once each month.

### ***Brain Injury Ambassador Program***

The Pennsylvania Brain Injury Ambassador Program, implemented in the Spring of 2020, remains in place. It is geared toward families and caregivers of persons with brain injury coming through in-patient rehabilitation hospitals throughout Pennsylvania. The goal of this program is to connect with families early on in the individual's recovery, to let them know that there is hope and resources available to them after brain injury. Six trained Brain Injury Ambassadors work with families referred by liaisons from participating rehabilitation facilities in their region to share information about brain injury services and supports they may need in the future. Ambassadors establish a communication method so families and caregivers can receive the BIAPA newsletter and let them know about the BIRL which they can call if help is needed in the future. While the original intent was to meet families in person, all contacts have been virtual since the implementation and that will be maintained based on the efficiency of these communications. Three new providers partnered with BIAPA on this initiative in 2022, bringing the total number of inpatient rehabilitation hospitals participating in the program to 11. There were 50 new referrals received in 2022, bringing the total number of referrals to 145 through the end of 2022.

### ***Pennsylvania BRAIN INJURY COALITION***

The Pennsylvania Brain Injury Coalition is made up of a group of volunteers that work together with the Brain Injury Legislative Caucuses to address the needs of the individuals in Pennsylvania living with brain injury related issues. The priorities for 2022 included:

- Access to post-acute NeuroRehabilitation services

- Addressing the impact of the low reimbursement rates on the staffing crisis, which has created an inability to identify appropriate staff for a specialized population and the resulting provider waitlists and delayed consumer access to care.
- Educating and training healthcare professionals for people who have unintentional opioid overdose, resulting in lack of oxygen causing brain injury
- Providing systems change for people with brain injury in criminal justice
- Ensuring appropriate educational supports are provided for children with brain injury, including concussion
- Supporting the use of tele-rehab as a method of increasing access to NeuroRehabilitation
- Assuring access to Supported Employment services for adults with brain injury
- Identify and support other populations where brain injury is over-represented and underserved (for example: homeless, mental health, domestic violence, substance abuse)
- Encouraging legislators to join the Brain Injury Legislative Caucuses

### **Council on Brain Injury (CoBI)**

Over the last 15 years, CoBI's mission has been to provide education and opportunities related to brain injury, support research for improved treatment, and be an advocate for the brain injury community wherever possible. In December of 2022, CoBI made the difficult announcement that the organization would be closing. To ensure critical programs continued, CoBI transferred the ReDiscoverU program, the Clinical Forum, and the David L Strauss Memorial Scholarship Fund to BIAPA. Throughout 2022, CoBI continued their work through the following programs and initiatives:

- **ReDiscoverU:** CoBI's adult evening school style, virtual program met weekly throughout 2022 on Mondays from 6PM – 7:30PM. Classes covered a variety of topics-of-interest ranging from Healthy Aging to Songwriting to Share Nights. Average number of participants per class, which were all individuals with brain injuries, was 12-15.
- **Clinical Forum:** CoBI's educational program, moved to a virtual format and offered free trainings geared toward professionals. CoBI's Clinical Forums were free of charge and also helped individuals certified by the Academy of Certified Brain Injury Specialist earn their necessary contact hours. The topics were Brain Injury across the Pediatric Life Span; Brain Injury and Opioid Misuse; the HOME Project for Survivors of Brain Injury: Research; and Life Care planning and TR.
- CoBI did not hold their annual golf tournament this year, but did offer the John Savelloni All Abilities Golf Clinic, with the support of the Fighting Back Scholarship and PGA Reach Philadelphia. Other sponsors and donors were USI Insurance, Alliant Employee Benefits, Oliver Heating & Cooling, Astor Weiss, Kaplan & Mandel, LLC, and Collage Rehabilitation Partners.

Through 2022, CoBI awarded nearly \$40,000 in grants to the following PA support groups and organizations from the tri-state:

- **BIAPA:** Scholarships for survivors and families to attend the annual BIAPA conference and support for a survivor retreat.
  - **Website:** [www.biapa.org](http://www.biapa.org)
- **Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey:** Support for survivor programming

- **Brock University:** Development of a Virtual Training Program for Behavior Management after brain Injury (For caregivers)
- **Bryn Athyn College:** Concussion Research and Education Project
  - **Website:** [www.brynathyn.edu](http://www.brynathyn.edu)
- **Bryn Mawr Rehabilitation Hospital:** Horticulture Therapy program
- **Camp Cranium:** Camp for children with brain injury.
  - **Website:** [www.campcranium.org](http://www.campcranium.org)
- **Fighting Back Scholarship Program:** Fitness scholarships, including virtual training, for Veterans.
  - **Website:** [www.fightingbacksp.org](http://www.fightingbacksp.org)
- **Harcum College:** Support its COTA preceptor program to include brain injury settings
  - **Website:** [www.harcum.edu](http://www.harcum.edu)
- **Magee Rehabilitation Hospital Foundation:** Supporting the art therapy program.
  - **Website:** [www.mageerehab.org](http://www.mageerehab.org)
- **Nancy's House:** A phone-in support group targeting families/caregivers of individuals with brain injuries.
  - **Website:** [www.Nancys-house.org](http://www.Nancys-house.org)
- **Project Green Heart Foundation:** Creating care baskets and information for families with adolescents in the hospital with brain injuries. Created by a family who has been there.
  - **Website:** <https://www.projectgreenheartfoundation.org/>
- **RESTART your Life/RENEW your Mind:** Survivor Nights Out, tech upgrade and more.
  - **Website:** [www.restartlife.net](http://www.restartlife.net)
- **Salus University:** Assessment equipment for the speech language pathology free clinic and treatment group.
  - **Website:** [www.salus.edu](http://www.salus.edu)
- **Slippery Rock University:** Equestrian/aquatics program for individuals with brain injuries, run by SRU's Therapeutic Recreation students and faculty.
  - **Website:** [www.sru.edu](http://www.sru.edu)
- **The Jazz Sanctuary, Inc:** Performances and events for individuals with brain injuries, including jazz bucket drums and Tai Chi.
  - **Website:** [www.thejazzsanctuary.com](http://www.thejazzsanctuary.com)

**For additional information or inquiries regarding Brain Injury services in Pennsylvania, please contact or go online at:**

**PA Dept of Health Head Injury Program (HIP) 1-717-772-2763 or 1-866-412-4755 (8:30 AM – 4PM)**

**<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/programs/Pages/Head-Injury.aspx>**

**PA Dept of Health NeuroResource Facilitation Program (NRFP) 1-717-772-2763 or 1-866-412-4755 (8:30 am – 4:00 pm)**

**<http://neuroresource.health.pa.gov>**

**Brain Injury Help Line 1-866-412-4755**

**Brain Injury Resource Line (BIRL) 1-800-444-6443**

**BIAPA 1-866-635-7097**

**[www.biapa.org](http://www.biapa.org)**

**Disability Rights Pennsylvania 1-800-692-7443**

**[www.disabilityrightspa.org](http://www.disabilityrightspa.org)**

**PA Health Law Project 800-274-3258**

**[www.php.org](http://www.php.org)**

**The Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board meetings are open to the public. If you would be interested in attending a meeting, please contact the Department of Health: 717-772-2763.**