

Elder Mental Health Outreach Terms. Support \$2.5 Million for EOE Line Item: #9110-1640 in FY '23 budget, a \$1.3 million increase over H2

Background:	According to MA Healthy Aging data, 1 in 3 older adults are diagnosed with a behavioral health condition. Older adults and people with disabilities face treatment barriers including ageism/ableism, costs of co-pays, difficulty getting to appointments or accessing telehealth, difficult managing appointments due to co-occurring cognitive conditions, and social isolation. Untreated behavioral health conditions are associated with high rates of hospitalization/ER use, nursing home admission, and preventable health concerns.
Recommendations:	Add \$1.3 million to the Geriatric Mental Health Line item over the Governor's FY23 H2 Budget to expand access to Elder Mental Health Outreach Services (EMHOTs) across MA
Proven Track Record:	EMHOTs overcome treatment barriers by working with older adults in their own homes to address the needs associated with behavioral health issues, such as chronic diseases, social isolation, housing insecurity, and financial challenges. EMHOTs currently serve 101 communities and are based in Amesbury, Bellingham, Boston, Dudley, Greenfield, Lowell, New Bedford, Pittsfield, and Somerville/Cambridge. Over the last four years, EMHOTs have provided more than 22,711 hours of counseling to elders in their service areas and delivered EMHOT services to more than 3,500 older adults. The most recent data shows that 95% of older adult EMHOT clients reported they received the help they were looking for, and more than 84% reported on their symptoms improved. Last year, 12 agencies submitted proposals (of which three could be funded) to create new, or expand existing, EMHOT services, reflecting a 300% increase in funding requests over previous years. Agencies cited long waitlists, lack of accessible treatment, and need for culturally responsive support.
Estimated Cost Savings:	From 7/1/2021 through 12/31/2021, 92 individuals referred to EMHOTs were in crisis. If these 92 individuals were hospitalized due to lack of EMHOT services, the economic impact would be between \$460,000 to \$1,472,000 (at \$5k to \$16k per admission). This is a massive increase over the \$826 average per client cost of the EMHOTs for the 564 EMHOT clients who received services in the first six months of 2021. Providers report that EMHOTs are critical to helping unwanted and costly nursing home admissions.

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[Issue B-0422-1]