



2025 Legislative Session Summary Report

Behavioral Health Alliance of Montana (BHAM)
Prepared by Sierra Riesberg, Executive Director | May 2025

The 2025 Legislative Session marked a meaningful step forward for Montana’s behavioral health system. BHAM successfully advanced all three of its legislative platform priorities - a milestone that underscores the power of focused, coordinated advocacy.

Thanks to strong collaboration with providers, advocates, and agency partners, the session delivered both major victories and hard-won incremental gains for BHAM members and the communities we serve. It was a true mission moment...one that united Montana’s behavioral health community. And in clear, undeniable terms, we proved that every step forward, big or small, moves us closer to our vision: *a healthier Montana for everyone*.

This report summarizes the budget items and legislation BHAM tracked most closely this session; *it does not serve as a comprehensive summary of the entire legislative session. Please note: at the time of publication, HB 2 has not yet been sent to the Governor, so some funding allocations and bill outcomes may still change if a veto occurs.*

69th Legislative Session Overview

- **Session Dates:** January 6 – April 30, 2025 (adjourned sine die on Day 85)
- **Bills Introduced:** 1,759 total (House: 1,036 | Senate: 723)
- **Behavioral Health Focus Areas:** Crisis care, workforce stabilization, Medicaid reform, provider reimbursement, Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment access, infrastructure investment
- **Political Context:** Republican majorities in both chambers; focus on budget control and system reform; ongoing emphasis on Medicaid and safety-net services

BHAM’s 2025 Policy Platform: Session Outcomes

☒ **Medicaid Rate Increases + Cost Reporting Reform**

BHAM collaborated with the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS), legislators, and other community and healthcare partners to advance HB 419, which would establish a biannual cost reporting process for Medicaid-funded behavioral health services. This effort builds on the original 2021 Medicaid Rate Study, which used pre-COVID data that no longer reflects today’s operating environment.



- **Why it matters:** Most providers are still being reimbursed below the actual cost of care, with adult behavioral health and SUD providers hit hardest. A regular cost reporting process will help drive inflation-adjusted, data-informed rates that better support provider sustainability and workforce retention.
- **The outcome:** While HB 419 advanced, its implementation would not immediately impact current reimbursement rates. However, BHAM helped initiate a broader conversation on provider rate adequacy and secured a 3% provider rate increase, proposed by Senator Emma Kerr-Carpenter and approved by the Legislature. This sets the stage for future rate adjustments.

☒ **Medicaid Expansion – Sunset Removed**

The removal of the sunset on Montana’s Medicaid Expansion marks a major victory for the behavioral health system, workforce participation, and family stability. Medicaid Expansion is a foundational support for adults needing access to mental health or substance use treatment - helping people return to work, care for their families, and reduce reliance on emergency or institutional services.

☒ **Supporting the BHSFG Recommendations**

BHAM supported and tracked several Governor-backed BHSFG initiatives that were funded in the 2025 budget. These are critical investments in Montana’s behavioral health infrastructure, designed to modernize care delivery and improve access statewide.

We’ll continue working with DPHHS and partners to support thoughtful implementation - and to ensure these system-level investments translate into real, on-the-ground improvements for providers and communities.

Summary of DPHHS’s Section B Budget Appropriations

Please note: at the time of publication, HB 2 has not yet been sent to the Governor, so some funding allocations and bill outcomes may still change if a veto occurs.

HB 2 – General Appropriations Act

Sponsor: Rep. Llew Jones – Passed 2nd Reading as Amended 4/2/25 – [Bill Link](#)

HB2 is Montana’s primary biennial budget bill, allocating funding across state agencies. Section B of the budget includes appropriations for DPHHS, with key investments in behavioral health services. For details: [Budget as of 5/13/2025](#)

Notable appropriations include:

- A 3% Medicaid provider rate increase
- Funding for several Behavioral Health System for Future Generations (BHSFG) initiatives



- Investments in crisis response and community-based services

HB2 / BHSFG Summary

For a full breakdown of each BHSFG recommendation funded through HB 2, DPHHS has posted [detailed summaries](#) (see February 10, 2025 entry).

BHSFG #1 – Reconfigure 0208 Waiver Service Rates

The recommendation calls for a comprehensive review and reconfiguration of existing 0208 waiver service rates (which fund home and community-based services for people with developmental disabilities). The current rate structure is outdated and insufficient to support service sustainability or workforce retention. Aligning rates with actual service costs of delivering care would improve system capacity and access.

- **Status – Restricted/ Biennial**
- **FY26 - \$437,503**
- **FY27 – \$4,589,300**

BHSFG #3 – Service Delivery System for Complex Needs

Establish an integrated, cross-agency service delivery system for individuals with complex behavioral and physical health needs by improving care coordination, leveraging flexible funding, and deploying high-acuity, person-centered teams across DPHHS divisions.

- **Status – Restricted/ Biennial**
- **FY26 - \$1,395,000**
- **FY27- \$7,480,000**

BHSFG #4 – Redefine and Reopen Evaluation and Diagnostic (E&D) Clinics

The recommendation supports reestablishing regional E&D Clinics for behavioral health and developmental evaluations, which once provided critical behavioral health and developmental assessments. Redefining their role would improve early diagnosis, access to Medicaid-authorized services, and system navigation - especially in rural areas.

- **Status - Restricted**
- **FY26 - \$50,000**
- **FY27 - \$1,000,000**

Glossary:

- **Restricted:** Funds can only be used for specific purposes
- **OTO:** One-Time Only
- **Biennial:** Funding applies to both years of the biennium
- **FY:** Fiscal year
- **FY26/FY27 –** amounts listed here are the total of general fund, state special revenue, etc. budgeted each fiscal year. Based on [Budget as of 5/13/2025](#)



BHSFG #6 – Funding for Targeted Case Management (TCM)

The recommendation seeks stabilize and expand access to TCM services across populations, as well as to expand eligibility and invest in case manager workforce recruitment and retention to prevent service gaps.

- **Status – Restricted/Biennial**
- **FY26 - \$480,273**
- **FY27 - \$1,230,273**

BHSFG #8 – Implement a Care Transitions Program

This initiative proposes the creation of a formal care transition program to support individuals exiting inpatient psychiatric or residential settings. The model would offer time-limited intensive coordination and linkage to outpatient services - especially for individuals at high risk of recidivism or readmission, with the goal to reduce hospital readmissions and improve discharge planning through structured transitions support.

- **Status – Restricted/Biennial**
- **FY26 - \$0**
- **FY27 - \$1,239,576**

BHSFG #9 – Adopt an Electronic Bed Registry & Enhance 988 System

⚠ The original recommendation included implementing a statewide, real-time bed registry (currently nonexistent) to reduce delays in inpatient or crisis stabilization placement, however, the committee did not move forward with funding towards the Bed Registry. **As it stands today, this recommendation moves forward with funding a 988 Marketing Campaign.**

- **Status – Restricted/ Biennial/ OTO**
- **FY26 - \$500,000**
- **FY27 - \$500,000**

BHSFG #17 – Redesign Rates for In-State Youth Residential Services

Realign reimbursement for Montana-based youth residential programs to prevent out-of-state placements. This recommendation would work to overhaul the rate structure for in-state Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTFs) and therapeutic group homes. The goal is to make in-state care financially viable, reduce unnecessary out-of-state placements, and promote family-centered treatment closer to home.

- **Status - Restricted/ Biennial/ OTO**
- **FY26 - \$150,000**
- **FY27 - \$3,251,280**



BHSFG #18 – School-Based Behavioral Health Initiatives

Increase investment and expand access to behavioral health services in school settings. Services would include care coordination, clinician placements, and partnerships with community providers. Emphasizes early intervention, trauma-informed practices, and reduced barriers to access for children and adolescents.

- **Status – Restricted/Biennial**
- **FY26 - \$1,764,145**
- **FY27 - \$1,764,145**

BHSFG #19 – Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities Workforce Incentivization

Seeks to address workforce shortages through targeted incentives. Recommends implementing strategies to recruit and retain behavioral health and developmental disabilities staff, including loan repayment, scholarships, internships, and tuition reimbursement. Also suggests streamlining credentialing and increasing pipeline development in rural and underserved areas.

- **Status - Restricted/ Biennial/ OTO**
- **FY26 - \$7,715,000**
- **FY27 - \$565,000**

BHSFG #22 – Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs)

Supports full implementation of the CCBHC model statewide, aligning Montana with federal standards for comprehensive, quality behavioral health care. The model includes enhanced reimbursement, outcome tracking, and integrated services for mental health and SUD.

- **In conjunction with HB 574**
- **Status – Restricted/Biennial/OTO**
- **FY26 – \$0**
- **FY27 - \$40,361,355**

Additional items added to HB2:

Provide Medicaid Home Visiting for Individuals with SUD or SDMI

- **Status - Restricted**
- **FY26 – \$1,680,584.00**
- **FY27 - \$1,730,994.00**

Fund Mental Health Community Beds

- **Status – Restricted/Biennial/OTO**
- **FY26 – \$1,250,000.00**
- **FY27 – \$1,250,000.00**



Increase Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) Bed Capacity

The line-item Increase Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility Bed Capacity (Restricted/OTO) is restricted to grants for increasing psychiatric residential treatment facility bed capacity across the state of Montana with the intention of prioritizing the youngest and highest-need kids.

- **Status – Restricted/OTO**
- **FY26 – \$1,237,000.00**
- **FY27 - \$0**

Montana State Hospital Beds

The line-item Montana State Hospital Beds (OTO) is contingent on passage of a bill that permits the use of state special revenue funds as provided in section 50-1-119, MCA, for expenditures for operating the Montana State Hospital.

- **Status – OTO**
- **FY26 – \$10,516,567.00**
- **FY27 - \$10,516,567.00**

Operational Costs for MHNCC D-Wing Repurposing and Licensing

- **Status - Restricted/ Biennial/ OTO**
- **FY26 – \$3,157,864.00**
- **FY27 - \$6,424,001.00**

Operational Costs for MSH Grasslands - Continued Subacute Step-Down

- **Status - Restricted/ Biennial/ OTO**
- **FY26 – \$6,229,092.00**
- **FY27 - \$3,966,125.00**

Summary of Key Legislative Bills

State

- **SB 144 – Change Name of Mental Health Advisory Council to Behavioral Health Advisory Council**
Sponsor: Sen. Mike Yakawich – Chapter Number Assigned 4/3/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Officially renames Montana’s “Mental Health Oversight Advisory Council” to the “Behavioral Health Advisory Council” to reflect a broader, integrated approach to behavioral health policy and services.
- **SB 191 – Provide for the Licensure of Residential Treatment Centers**
Sponsor: Sen. Mike Cuffe – Signed by Governor 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Establishes a licensing framework for Residential Treatment Centers (RTCs) that serve children and youth with mental health needs, providing clearer oversight and standards of care.



- **SB 516 – Update Licensing Requirements for DPHHS-Licensed Facilities**
Sponsor: Sen. Mike Yakawich – Signed by Governor 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Updates licensing requirements for all facilities regulated by DPHHS, aiming to modernize oversight practices and ensure consistency across provider types.
- **HB 502 – Establish Board of Facility Health Care Professionals**
Sponsor: Rep. Greg Oblander – Chapter Number Assigned 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Creates a new state board to oversee allied health professionals working in licensed healthcare facilities. Streamlines licensing and regulatory procedures across the profession.
- **HB 545 – Revise Laws Related to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP)**
Sponsor: Rep. Tyson Running Wolf – Transmitted to Governor 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Reforms the state’s MMIP response by restructuring the task force, expanding its responsibilities, and improving coordination among state, tribal, and federal agencies.
- **HB 949 – Require Fee Schedule and Report for Certain Commitments**
Requester: Rep. Willis Curdy – Transmitted to Governor 5/7/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Directs DPHHS to establish a fee schedule for commitments to certain facilities and to report biennially on the number and types of individuals committed or detained under state law, along with facility-level data.
- **SB 537 – Generally Revise Marijuana Tax Laws**
Requester: Sen. Daniel Zolnikov – Returned from Enrolling 5/1/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Proposes major changes to how marijuana tax revenue is distributed. Balances support between conservation efforts and public safety programs, including behavioral health and law enforcement funding.
- **HB 932 – Generally Revise Conservation Financing Laws**
Requester: Rep. Becky Edwards – Transmitted to Governor 5/7/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Revises the allocation formula for marijuana tax revenue to increase funding available for conservation initiatives.

Medicaid/ Insurance

- **HB 245 – Revise the Montana HELP Act Workforce Development Provisions and Termination Date**
Sponsor: Rep. Ed Buttrey – Signed by Governor 3/27/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Lifts the sunset on Medicaid Expansion and revises workforce development provisions under the HELP Act to strengthen healthcare access.
- **HB 398 – Revise Insurance Laws Related to Prior Authorization of Chronic Conditions**
Sponsor: Rep. Jonathan Karlen – Chapter Number Assigned 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Streamlines prior authorization requirements for individuals with chronic



conditions. Aims to reduce delays in treatment and ease administrative burdens for patients and providers.

- **HB 399 – Revise Prior Authorization Laws**

Sponsor: Rep. Jonathan Karlen – Chapter Number Assigned 4/17/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Reforms health insurance prior authorization processes to reduce administrative burdens and improve timely access to essential medications.

- **HB 585 – Revise Provider Rate Laws for PT, SLP, and OT**

Sponsor: Rep. Ed Buttrey – Returned from Enrolling 4/18/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Establishes a standardized Medicaid reimbursement formula for physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, and occupational therapists using a specific conversion factor.

- **★SB 244 – Require Coverage of Behavioral Health Screenings**

Sponsor: Sen. Mike Yakawich – Signed by President 4/21/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Requires insurers to cover evidence-based behavioral health screenings and assessments at no out-of-pocket cost when requested by an individual.

- **SB 72 – Provide Presumptive Eligibility for HCBS**

Sponsor: Sen. Mike Yakawich – Signed by President 4/21/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Establishes presumptive eligibility under Medicaid for home and community-based services, allowing elderly and disabled individuals immediate access while full applications are processed.

- **HB 56 – Establish Ambulance Provider Assessment Fee Program**

Sponsor: Rep. Ed Buttrey – Signed by Governor 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Creates a fee program to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for emergency ambulance services through provider assessments.

- **★HB 601 – Create Online Portal for Medicaid Community Assisters**

Sponsor: Rep. SJ Howell – Signed by Governor 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Establishes a Medicaid Community Assister Portal to streamline enrollment support and increase application efficiency by May 1, 2026.

- **HB 687 – Revise Age for Medicaid Community Engagement Requirements**

Sponsor: Rep. Bill Mercer – Signed by Governor 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Modifies the age range of Medicaid expansion participants subject to community engagement activity requirements.

- **★HB 419 – Implement Cost Reporting for Medicaid Providers**

Sponsor: Rep. David Bedey – Transmitted to Governor 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Directs DPHHS to develop a standardized cost reporting process to evaluate the adequacy of reimbursement rates for adult/children's mental health, SUD, DD, and SLTC providers. First report due by September 1, 2026.

- **HB 953 – Revise Medicaid Laws Related to Direct Primary Care**

Requester: Sen. Jason Ellsworth – Transmitted to Governor 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Incorporates direct primary care (DPC) models into the state's Medicaid program, expanding flexible healthcare access options for enrollees.



- **HB 473 – Allow for Automatic CMS Medicare Fee Schedule Updates**
Sponsor: Rep. Jane Gillette – Chapter Number Assigned 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Authorizes DPHHS to automatically adopt updated Medicare fee schedules issued by CMS, improving administrative efficiency and ensuring alignment with federal reimbursement rates.
- **HB 544 – Revise Health Insurance Laws Related to Utilization Review**
Sponsor: Rep. Ed Buttrey – Chapter Number Assigned 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Enhances patient protections and simplifies administrative procedures related to health insurance utilization review processes.
- **★HB 880 – Establish a Stabilization Fund for Medicaid**
Requester: Sen. Mary Caferro – Transmitted to Governor 5/7/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Creates a Medicaid Stabilization Reserve Account to help protect Montana’s Medicaid program from future budget shortfalls and funding volatility.
- **HB 881 – Expand Medicaid Buy-In Program to Include Children with Disabilities**
Requester: Sen. Mary Caferro – Transmitted to Governor 5/7/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Extends Montana’s Medicaid buy-in program to children with disabilities, providing coverage regardless of family income. Previously limited to working adults with disabilities.
- **HB 576 – Revise Medicaid Funding for Aged, Blind, and Disabled Populations**
Sponsor: Rep. Jane Gillette – Signed by Governor 5/8/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Redirects tobacco settlement revenue to strengthen Medicaid and health support services for children and adults who are aged, blind, or disabled.
- **HB 732 – Establish Prompt Cost Report Reimbursement Act**
Sponsor: Rep. David Bedey – Signed by Governor 5/8/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Improves the Medicaid reimbursement process for critical access hospitals by ensuring timely payments based on submitted cost reports.
- **★SB 317 – Prohibit Prior Authorization for Certain Psychiatric Drugs**
Sponsor: Sen. Dennis Lenz – Signed by Governor 5/8/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Bars insurers from requiring prior authorization for psychiatric medications that are discontinued or in short supply, helping preserve timely access to treatment.
- **HB 610 – Revise Preauthorization Laws Relating to Healthcare**
Sponsor: Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe – Veto Override Vote (Mail Poll) in Progress as of 5/10/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Revises preauthorization requirements for specific antipsychotic medications under Medicaid. Aims to eliminate delays for essential psychiatric medications.

Behavioral Health – General

- **★HB 574 – Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs)**
Sponsor: Rep. Jane Gillette – Signed into law 5/8/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Authorizes statewide implementation of the CCBHC model, improving access to



integrated, community-based behavioral health services with enhanced accountability and funding mechanisms.

- **SB 170 – Eliminate Termination Date of Community Health Aide Program (CHAP)**
Sponsor: Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy – Chapter Number Assigned 4/3/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Makes Montana’s Community Health Aide Program permanent by removing its sunset clause. Ensures continued delivery of culturally competent, community-based care—especially in rural and tribal communities.
- **HB 241 – Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact (PSYPACT)**
Sponsor: Rep. Jodee Etchart – Signed into law 4/17/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Adopts PSYPACT, allowing licensed psychologists in Montana to provide telepsychology and temporary in-person services across participating states without needing additional licenses.
- **HB 669 – Education for Children in Inpatient Treatment**
Sponsor: Rep. David Bedey – Returned from enrolling 4/28/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Revises laws to ensure children receiving in-state inpatient treatment for serious emotional disturbances receive appropriate educational services during their stay.
- **☼SB 369 – Suicide Prevention in Schools**
Sponsor: Sen. Mike Yakawich – Signed into law 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Strengthens school-based suicide prevention efforts by requiring regular training for school personnel and ensuring access to relevant resources.
- **☼HB 76 – Certification of Family Peer Support Specialists**
Sponsor: Rep. SJ Howell – Transmitted to Governor 5/7/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Establishes a certification process for family peer support specialists—caregivers with lived experience supporting children with behavioral health needs. Certification is overseen by the Board of Behavioral Health. While not tied to Medicaid reimbursement yet, it lays important groundwork for integration across care settings.
- **☼SB 95 – Suicide Prevention Funding**
Sponsor: Sen. Mike Yakawich – Signed into law 5/8/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Allocates \$300,000 to DPHHS for suicide prevention efforts specifically targeting veterans, service members, and their families during the 2025–2027 biennium.

SUD

- **SB 132 – Revise Minor in Possession Laws**
Sponsor: Sen. Tom McGillvray – Chapter Number Assigned 4/17/25 – [Bill Link](#)
Updates laws related to minors in possession of alcohol, marijuana, and other intoxicating substances. Establishes age-specific offenses and graduated penalties based on the number of violations.
- **SB 375 – Prohibit Sale of Edible Products That Contain Hemp**
Sponsor: Sen. Mark Noland – Signed by Governor 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)



Bans the sale of edible products containing hemp-derived cannabinoids such as unregulated Delta-9, enhancing product safety and reducing youth access.

- **HB 636 – Revise Marijuana Laws (Edible Serving Sizes)**

Sponsor: Rep. Jodee Etchart – Signed by Governor 5/8/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Establishes THC serving size standards for edibles and restricts multi-serving products to reduce accidental overconsumption.

- **HB 792 – Revise Cannabis Labeling and Education Requirements**

Sponsor: Rep. Melody Cunningham – Signed by Governor 5/8/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Requires enhanced labeling and in-store educational materials for cannabis products. Includes warning labels, potency disclosures, and public health messaging at the point of sale.

- **SB 503 – Allow Use of Expired Opioid Antagonists**

Sponsor: Sen. Cora Neumann – Signed by Governor 5/8/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Authorizes the use of expired opioid antagonists (e.g., naloxone) in emergency overdose situations, supporting harm reduction efforts in rural and resource-limited settings.

- **SB 74 – Comprehensive Marijuana Law Revisions**

Sponsor: Sen. Josh Kassmier – Signed by Governor 5/8/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Implements broad updates to Montana’s marijuana regulatory framework, refining definitions, enhancing product safety standards, and clarifying compliance expectations for businesses.

Crisis/ Criminal Justice

- **SB 429 – Revise Laws Related to Determination and Restoration of Fitness in Criminal Proceedings**

Sponsor: Sen. John Esp – Transmitted to Governor 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Proposes comprehensive revisions to how Montana determines and restores a defendant’s fitness to stand trial. Seeks to improve procedural clarity while protecting due process rights and ensuring efficient administration of justice.

- **SB 430 – Revise Laws Related to Civil Commitment and Emergency Detention**

Sponsor: Sen. John Esp – Transmitted to Governor 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Overhauls Montana’s civil commitment and emergency detention laws for individuals with mental illness. Enhances due process protections, expands access to community-based treatment, and clarifies admission and detention procedures.

- **SB 435 – Revise Laws Related to Mentally Ill Individuals**

Sponsor: Sen. John Esp (Requested by Sen. Steve Fitzpatrick) – Transmitted to Governor 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Expands due process protections and improves protocols for emergency detention and access to mental health evaluations and treatment. Complements broader reforms under SB 430.



- **SB 70 – Revise Laws Related to Supervision on Probation**

Sponsor: Sen. Gayle Lammers – Chapter Number Assigned 5/8/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Updates Montana’s probation supervision statutes to allow greater flexibility in managing conditions of release while maintaining safeguards for due process and victim notification.

Child and Family Services

- **SB 147 – Revise Montana Indian Child Welfare Laws**

Sponsor: Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy – Transmitted to Governor 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Updates the Montana Indian Child Welfare Act (MICWA) to strengthen legal protections for Native American children and families involved in the state’s child welfare system, ensuring compliance with cultural and tribal standards.

- **SB 17 – Revise Laws Related to Hearings After the Emergency Removal and Protective Placement of a Child**

Sponsor: Sen. Dennis Lenz – Chapter Number Assigned 4/3/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Revises the legal timelines and court procedures that follow the emergency removal and protective placement of a child, with the goal of clarifying process expectations and improving system responsiveness.

- **SB 18 – Revise the Definition of Child Abuse or Neglect**

Sponsor: Sen. Dennis Lenz – Chapter Number Assigned 4/3/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Clarifies that poverty, substance use, or substandard living conditions alone do not constitute abuse or neglect. Aims to reduce unnecessary child welfare interventions in families facing economic or systemic challenges.

- **HB 77 – Revise Laws Related to Child Abuse and Neglect Investigations by DPHHS**

Sponsor: Rep. SJ Howell – Signed by Governor 4/7/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Updates procedures for DPHHS investigations into abuse and neglect to enhance transparency and ensure consistency across jurisdictions involved in child welfare cases.

- **SB 206 – Revise Laws Related to Child Abuse and Neglect Proceedings and Investigations**

Sponsor: Sen. Dennis Lenz – Chapter Number Assigned 4/17/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Creates clearer distinctions between the roles of child protection investigators and child reunification specialists to strengthen Montana’s child welfare system and clarify responsibilities during case management.

- **SB 248 – Provide Legislator Access to CPS Records Including Drug Testing Results**

Sponsor: Sen. Dennis Lenz – Chapter Number Assigned 4/17/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Amends Montana Code to explicitly grant legislators access to drug testing results contained in child protective services (CPS) records as part of their official review authority.



- **SB 256 – Generally Revise Child Abuse and Neglect Laws**

Sponsor: Sen. Dennis Lenz – Chapter Number Assigned 4/17/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Modifies confidentiality and discovery rules for CPS records, aiming to improve transparency while maintaining appropriate privacy protections in abuse and neglect proceedings.

Miscellaneous

- **HB 41 – Revise Dangerous Drug Schedule**

Sponsor: Rep. Curtis Schomer – Chapter Number Assigned 2/28/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Updates Montana’s controlled substance schedule to align with federal standards. Notably adds **gabapentin** as a monitored substance due to increasing misuse concerns.

- **SB 280 – Revise Domestic Violence Intervention Grant Requirements**

Sponsor: Sen. Mike Yakawich – Chapter Number Assigned 4/17/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Strengthens community oversight and compliance monitoring for individuals charged with or convicted of domestic violence offenses under intervention grant programs.

- **★SB 394 – Workers’ Comp Coverage for First Responders with PTSD**

Sponsor: Sen. Cora Neumann – Signed by President 5/1/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Expands workers’ compensation to include PTSD diagnoses for first responders resulting from their line of work.

- **★SB 497 – Address Healthcare Provider Burnout**

Sponsor: Sen. Wendy McKamey – Transmitted to Governor 5/5/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Creates a confidential wellness program for healthcare professionals to address burnout, stress, and mental health needs.

- **SB 319 – Revise Health Care Laws Related to Doulas**

Sponsor: Sen. Cora Neumann – Transmitted to Governor 5/6/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Establishes a voluntary certification process for doulas and allows Medicaid reimbursement for certified services, improving access to perinatal support.

- **HB 590 – Revise Laws Related to Electronic Health Records**

Sponsor: Rep. Greg Oblander – Transmitted to Governor 5/7/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Modernizes Montana’s electronic health records (EHR) laws to support patient access, data interoperability, and stronger privacy protections.

- **HB 850 – Licensing and Regulation of Community Health Workers (CHWs)**

Requester: Sen. Ed Buttrey – Transmitted to Governor 5/7/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Establishes statewide licensing and training requirements for CHWs, with potential for Medicaid reimbursement. Expands access to care in rural and underserved communities.

- **SB 296 – Enhance Penalty for Crime Against Vulnerable Person**

Sponsor: Sen. Mike Yakawich – Signed by Governor 5/8/25 – [Bill Link](#)



Increases penalties for crimes committed against vulnerable individuals, particularly in caregiving or institutional settings.

Study Bills

- **SJ 37 – Interim Survey of Behavioral Health Services in Montana**

Requester: Sen. Dennis Lenz – Transmitted to Governor 5/6/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Map behavioral health service capacity statewide—including detention beds, crisis services, and professional workforce distribution—to identify service gaps and guide future investments.

- **SJ 48 – Interim Study of the Public Health and Safety Impacts of Marijuana Legalization**

Requester: Sen. Greg Hertz – Transmitted to Governor 5/6/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Examine the public health and safety impacts of marijuana legalization in Montana. Focus areas include ER visit trends, youth usage and academic effects, criminal justice implications, and behavioral health service demand.

- **SJ 49 – Interim Study of Youth and Family Behavioral Health Prevention**

Requester: Sen. Mike Yakawich – Transmitted to Governor 5/6/25 – [Bill Link](#)

Assess the effectiveness of behavioral health prevention programs for youth and families across Montana, with the goal of strengthening early intervention strategies.

What's Next?

As the 2025 Legislative Session concludes, BHAM's work now turns toward strategic oversight, partnership-building, and shaping what comes next. Key priorities include:

- **Interim Legislative Committees & Studies**

BHAM will actively engage with interim legislative committees, particularly those examining Medicaid, behavioral health, and public health infrastructure. We'll monitor agendas, provide testimony when needed, and ensure provider perspectives are represented. BHAM is also closely following interim studies approved this session. These studies will shape future policy recommendations and BHAM will work to ensure they reflect real system needs and realities.

- **SJ 37** – Mapping behavioral health service capacity across Montana
- **SJ 49** – Evaluating prevention programs for youth and families
- **SJ 48** – Assessing public health and safety impacts of marijuana legalization

- **Implementation Oversight**

With many wins now moving into the execution phase, BHAM will work with DPHHS and other partners to:

- Track implementation of BHSFG-funded initiatives
- Monitor allocation of funding, timelines, and outcomes
- Gather member feedback on rollout and readiness



- **Federal Policy Monitoring**

We'll watch closely for federal developments that could impact Montana's behavioral health system, including proposed Medicaid reforms, funding stability, and regulatory changes at the national level.

- **Partnership & System Alignment**

BHAM remains committed to strong partnerships with providers, state agencies, and advocacy allies. We'll work collaboratively to ensure new policies and investments translate into meaningful, measurable improvements for communities.

- **Member Engagement & Advocacy Readiness**

Members are encouraged to stay engaged throughout the interim by sharing feedback, lifting up local perspectives, and participating in key conversations. BHAM will work to support coordination and communication so we can respond together to state and federal developments as they arise.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you. To BHAM members and the Legislative Committee, to Legislators and staff, to our advocacy partners and coalition allies who show up and support one another throughout the session, to direct care staff, clients, community members, to DPHHS, and very especially to Pat Noonan, Mary Windecker, and Andy Kemmis.

It's an honor to connect, collaborate, and learn from each other, together. It's both humbling and inspiring to see what we can achieve both individually and collectively. The willingness to show up with respect and shared purpose, even when we hold different views or approaches, is powerful.

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