

OL & CONNECT Spotlight

Office of Licensing

Issue XI: October 2026

DBHDS Mission Statement:

Supporting individuals by promoting recovery, self-determination, and wellness in all aspects of life

DBHDS Vision Statement:

A life of possibilities for all Virginians

***Director's Corner***

As we move into the final quarter of the year, the Office of Licensing would like to provide several important regulatory reminders and upcoming requirements related to an exempt regulatory action for all DBHDS licensed providers. The information below is intended to support ongoing compliance, promote preparedness, and ensure that providers remain informed of regulatory expectations.

Emergency Preparedness Requirements

To begin, providers are reminded that hurricane season extends through November 30th. This period serves as an appropriate time to review the provider's emergency preparedness and response plan in accordance with 12VAC35-105-530 and 12VAC35-46-1110. The plan shall be reviewed at least annually, and all employees, contractors, students, and volunteers must be adequately prepared to implement its procedures. Providers are required to follow their established emergency preparedness plan, including procedures for notifying local and state authorities when an emergency occurs.

If an emergency disrupts services or necessitates relocation, the provider shall notify the assigned licensing specialist through the CONNECT Portal, if able. If internet access is limited or unavailable, the provider shall promptly contact the licensing specialist by telephone. Residential providers are also reminded to verify their emergency supply inventory. Pursuant to 12VAC35-105-530.E, "Providers of residential services shall have at all times a three-day supply of emergency food and water for all individuals receiving services and staff. Emergency food supplies should include foods that do not require cooking. Water supplies shall include one gallon of water per person per day."

Unannounced Inspection Expectations

In addition to emergency preparedness requirements, providers should be aware of expectations related to unannounced inspections. The Office of Licensing is required to conduct at least one unannounced inspection per service annually. Maintaining regular and reliable office hours is necessary to facilitate this requirement. DBHDS licensed providers must maintain designated office hours during normal business hours to ensure that on-site reviews can be completed without undue delay.

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Director's Corner Continued

Failure to maintain office hours, resulting in delayed inspections, may adversely affect the renewal of a license. When licensing specialists arrive and no personnel are present, the provider is expected to return the contact within 30 minutes. Providers must also ensure availability for an exit meeting at the conclusion of the inspection.

Upcoming Regulatory Changes: Emergency Medical Simulations

Finally, providers should prepare for an upcoming regulatory change. An exempt regulatory action are anticipated to go into effect on December 1, 2026, requiring licensed providers to conduct quarterly emergency medical simulations. Under 12VAC35-105-460 B and 12VAC35-46-310 C, "Providers shall conduct emergency medical simulations at least once every quarter." The amendments further require providers to document the simulation schedule, include a hands-on replication of at least one specific medical emergency, avoid repeating scenarios in consecutive simulations, ensure a supervisor is on-site, and maintain documentation of each simulation for three years.

While the Office of Licensing will begin reviewing for compliance on December 1, 2026 (or the effective date, if different), a 90-day implementation grace period will occur through March 1, 2027. During this grace period, licensing specialists will document any gaps and indicate in the recommendations section of the licensing report that the provider is not yet in compliance but remains within the grace period. After March 1, 2027, providers that do not meet the requirement will be cited. The Office of Licensing will not retroactively review simulations before December 1, 2026, as simulations were not a regulatory requirement prior to that date.

Thank you for your continued partnership and commitment to delivering safe, high-quality services across the Commonwealth. We appreciate your ongoing efforts to stay informed and maintain compliance as requirements evolve.

Jae Benz

Director, Office of Licensing



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Risk & Quality

As we continue our shared commitment to providing safe, effective, and high-quality services, the Office of Licensing wants to take a moment to remind providers about two important areas of the DBHDS licensing regulations: 12VAC35-105-520, Risk Management, and 12VAC35-105-620, Monitoring and Evaluating Service Quality.

These requirements are an important part of ensuring that providers have processes in place to identify risks, respond to concerns, monitor the quality of services, and use what they learn to make meaningful improvements. It is important to remember that the requirements of 12VAC35-105-520 and 12VAC35-105-620 apply to all licensed services that are required to comply with the general regulations (12VAC35-105).

Compliance Is More Than a Written Plan

Risk management and quality improvement are most effective when they are part of the provider's everyday operations—not simply documents maintained for an inspection. The information providers gather through incident reviews, risk assessments, quality monitoring, record reviews, feedback, and other activities can provide valuable insight into what is working well and where additional attention may be needed.

We encourage providers to regularly ask:

- Are we identifying risks before they result in harm?
- Are we looking for trends and patterns in our data?
- Are we taking action when concerns are identified?
- Are we evaluating whether those actions are effective?
- Are we using what we learn to improve the services and supports we provide?

These questions can help turn regulatory requirements into meaningful quality improvement activities that benefit the individuals receiving services.

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Take Advantage of Available Resources

The Office of Licensing recognizes that implementing the requirements of 12VAC35-105-520 and 12VAC35-105-620 can be challenging, particularly as providers work to develop processes that are meaningful and sustainable for their organizations. Fortunately, providers do not have to navigate these requirements alone.

The OL website offers a variety of resources, training opportunities, templates, guidance documents, and other tools to assist providers with understanding and implementing the risk management and quality improvement requirements.

Providers are encouraged to review these resources and incorporate those that are useful to their organizations. Resources are available to assist with areas such as developing and maintaining risk management and quality improvement plans, conducting systemic risk assessments, tracking and analyzing data, conducting root cause analysis, and identifying opportunities for improvement.

Links to Resources

Risk Management

[Updated Risk Management Attestation Form \(June 2026\)](#)

[Sample Risk Management Plan \(June 2021\)](#)

[Sample Risk Assessment Sample 1 Non Residential Provider \(August 2023\)](#)

[Systemic Risk Assessment Sample 2 Provider of a 4-Bed Group Home \(August 2023\)](#)

[Systemic Risk Assessment Sample 3 Intensive In Home Service Provider \(August 2023\)](#)

[Systemic Risk Assessment Sample 4 Medication Assistance Service \(August 2023\)](#)

[Systemic-Risk-Assessment-Template_fillable-with-examples.pdf](#)

[Individual-Risk-Tracking-Tool-November-2024.xlsx](#)

Quality Improvement

[Tools for Developing a Quality Improvement Program \(March 2025\)](#)

[Sample Provider Quality Improvement Plan \(March 2024\)](#)

[Quality Improvement Q&A's \(Updated June 2022\)](#)

[Quality Improvement Tips and Tools Training \(June 2021\)](#)

[Quality Improvement & Risk Management Strategies Training - Handout \(December 2020\)](#)

[Quality Improvement & Risk Management Strategies Training - Webinar \(December 2020\)](#)

[Quality Improvement Training \(November 2020\)](#)

[Tracking of Level I Serious Incidents vs. Baseline Behaviors Memo \(February 2023\)](#)

[Clinical and Quality Management - Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services \(DBHDS\)](#)

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Risk Management

Designated, Trained Oversight: Providers are required to appoint a dedicated person responsible for the risk management function. This individual must complete specialized, department-approved training covering individual risk screening, conducting investigations, root cause analysis, and the use of data to identify risk patterns and trends.

Structured Mitigation Plans: Organizations must implement a comprehensive, written risk management plan specifically tailored to identify, monitor, reduce and minimize risk. This includes guarding against personal injury (including serious incidents and care concerns), infectious disease, property damage or loss, and other sources of potential liability.

Annual Systemic Risk Assessments: Providers cannot simply set a policy and forget it. The code requires annual systemic risk reviews to evaluate the environment of care, clinical assessment or reassessment processes, staff competence and adequacy of staffing, use of high-risk procedures, including seclusion and restraint; and a review of serious incidents.

Risk Triggers and Thresholds: As part of the Systemic Risk Assessment, providers must also evaluate ongoing care concerns that may influence individual safety and service quality. This includes monitoring for emerging patterns in behavioral health needs, identifying weaknesses in routine care practices, and responding promptly to signs of potential neglect or insufficient supports. Addressing care concerns within the SRA ensures that risks are not only reviewed annually but continuously managed through active observation, communication among staff, and timely corrective actions.

Visit the OL website for additional tools and resources:

Quality Improvement

Structured Quality Improvement (QI) Program: Providers are required to establish written policies and procedures to evaluate clinical and service quality on a systematic, ongoing basis

Utilization of Standardized QI Tools: Organizations cannot rely on casual observations. They must implement standardized quality improvement tools—explicitly including root cause analysis—to investigate trends and failures.

Active, Dynamic QI Plan: Rather than operating as a static binder on a shelf, the required Quality Improvement Plan must be reviewed and updated at least annually. It must outline operationally defined, measurable goals and objectives while integrating mandated statewide performance measures, as required by DBHDS, monitor implementation and effectiveness of approved CAPs and including ongoing monitoring of progress toward established goals and objectives.

Closing the Loop on Corrective Actions: A provider's QI Program must include the criteria for establishing measurable goals and objectives for the QI Plan, updating the QI Plan, monitoring any corrective actions, and determining when to submit a revised CAP to the department for approval or put into place additional measures to prevent the recurrence of the cited violation(s). A provider's QI Program must outline a clear, written process for handling ineffective Corrective Action Plans (CAPs).

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Risk & Quality

Expanded Clinical Quality Support Through ECTA

In addition to the resources available through the Office of Licensing, DBHDS is continuing to expand opportunities to support providers in strengthening quality and compliance practices. The Office of Community Quality Improvement (QCQI) currently provides Expanded Consultation and Technical Assistance (ECTA) to providers serving individuals with developmental services. ECTA offers providers enhanced support to review their practices, identify areas for improvement, and strengthen the quality of their services through learning tools, resources, and guidance for Risk Management and Quality Improvement processes.

This support will soon be extended to behavioral health providers through Behavioral Health QI/RM Primer sessions. These sessions introduce foundational QI/RM concepts, tools, and practices to help organizations build a culture of quality and strengthen clinical care. After the Primer, the ECTA Team will offer its full voluntary services related to 12VAC35-105-520 and 12VAC35-105-620. Providers are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities. ECTA assists organizations with moving beyond basic regulatory compliance toward sustainable practices that promote quality, safety, and positive outcomes.

Building a Culture of Quality

Ultimately, compliance with 12VAC35-105-520 and 12VAC35-105-620 is not simply about meeting a regulatory requirement. It is about creating a culture in which providers routinely ask how they can make services safer, more effective, and more responsive to the individuals they serve.

The Office of Licensing encourages providers to take some time to review these regulations and the resources available through DBHDS. Consider whether your current processes are not only compliant but also provide meaningful information that can help your organization identify risks, address concerns, and continuously improve.

Thank you for the important work you do each day on behalf of the individuals, families, and communities we serve. Strong risk management and quality improvement practices are an important part of that work, and DBHDS is committed to supporting providers in achieving compliance while promoting meaningful improvements in quality.

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CONNECT Reminders

- ✓ Authorized Contacts in the Provider Portal must be kept up to date to ensure timely receipt and management of **CONNECT** communications and appropriate access to the Provider Portal Dashboard. This includes immediately removing staff who leave the organization or no longer require access. Failure to maintain accurate Authorized Contacts creates a significant security risk and may result in unauthorized access to confidential information.
- ✓ If you have submitted an Initial or Modification Application, you may receive a Deficiency Letter that outlines additional information or revisions required for approval. If you have uploaded the requested documents, ***It is the responsibility of the provider to complete the following steps to return the application for review:***
 - ✓ Scroll down on the application screen and sign the application.
 - ✓ For Initial Applications: Click the “**Update Initial Application**” button.
 - ✓ For Modification Applications: Click the “**Update Modification Application**” button.
- ✓ It is also the responsibility of the provider to communicate with Policy Review Specialists and Modification Specialists via the **CONNECT** Messaging Portal. ***Allow 24-48*** hours for a response.



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CONNECT Live Demonstrations

CONNECT: [Provider Portal Overview Recorded Webinar](#)

CONNECT: [Adding Locations Recorded Webinar](#)

CONNECT: [Adding Services Recorded Webinar](#)

CONNECT: [Corrective Action Plans Recorded Webinar](#)

CONNECT: [Correspondence and Messaging Recorded Webinar](#)

CONNECT: [Information Modification Recorded Webinar](#)

CONNECT: [License Renewals Recorded Webinar](#)

CONNECT: [Managing Contacts Recorded Webinar](#)

CONNECT: [Password Management and Variance Applications Recorded Webinar](#)

To submit a CONNECT Help Desk ticket, please click here:

<https://dbhds.virginia.gov/clinical-and-quality-management/office-of-licensing/>
and select CONNECT Help Desk

Link to CONNECT Provider Portal:

<https://vadbhds7prod.glsuite.us/GLSuiteWeb/Clients/VADBHDS/Private/LoginDashboard/Login.aspx>

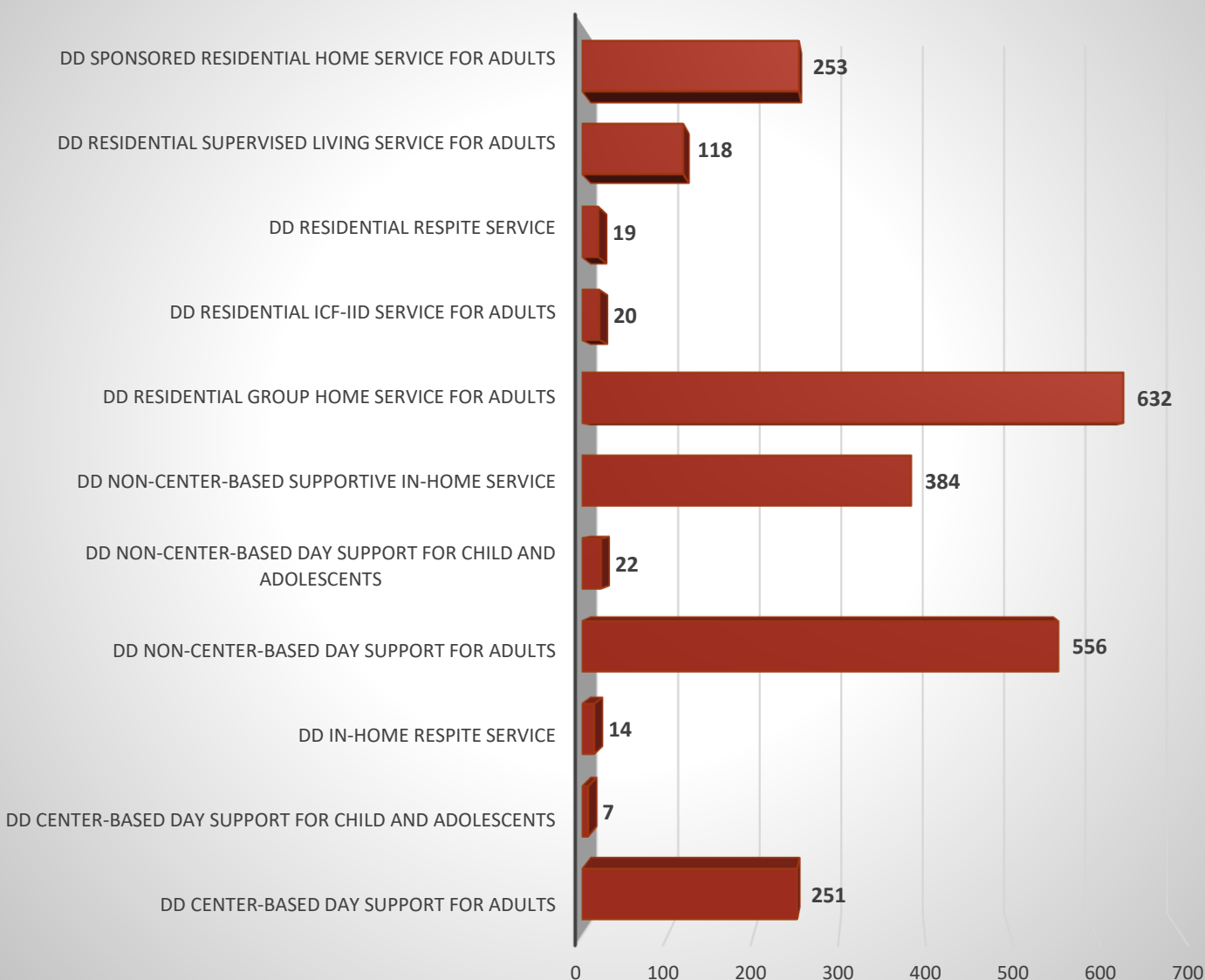


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Modification Type/Menu	When to Submit This Type of Application
Add New Service	This type of notification, along with the required supporting documentation, will need to be submitted if a provider wants to add a NEW service/license. This option is found at the top of the Active Licenses on the Provider Portal Dashboard.
View/Add New Location	This type of modification, along with the required supporting documentation, will need to be submitted if a provider wants to add an additional location to an existing service OR relocate a service requiring a change in physical address from one location to another. *If a provider is changing their address (moving their current location to another physical location), the provider will also need to submit an Information Modification to close the current location/address (see below). Note for Sponsored Residential Services: If a provider currently holds a license for a sponsored residential service, they will not submit a location modification to add the location. The sponsored provider will need to follow the <u>Sponsored Provider Certification Process Memo</u>. Please use this <u>Updated Sponsored Residential Certification Form</u> when requesting to add additional Sponsored Residential Locations.
Information Modification	This type of modification, along with the required supporting documentation, must be submitted to make general changes. The appropriate information modification type must be selected for the Office of Licensing to process your request for change. If the correct information modification type is not selected, the Information Modification will be withdrawn by the OL and the provider will be advised to resubmit. The Information Modification can be submitted for the following reasons: • Provider Name Change (include SCC certificate) • Organizational Structure Change (include organization chart) • Close Provider Organization • Service Description Change • Geographical Area Served Change • Population Served Change (Age, Gender, Disability) • Close Service or Number of Beds or Capacity Change • Demographic Information Change • Building or Home Modification Change • Close Location • Other Modification (Use for changing Main Authorized Contact) This menu option is found to the left of the Provider Portal Dashboard screen in the blue menu box.

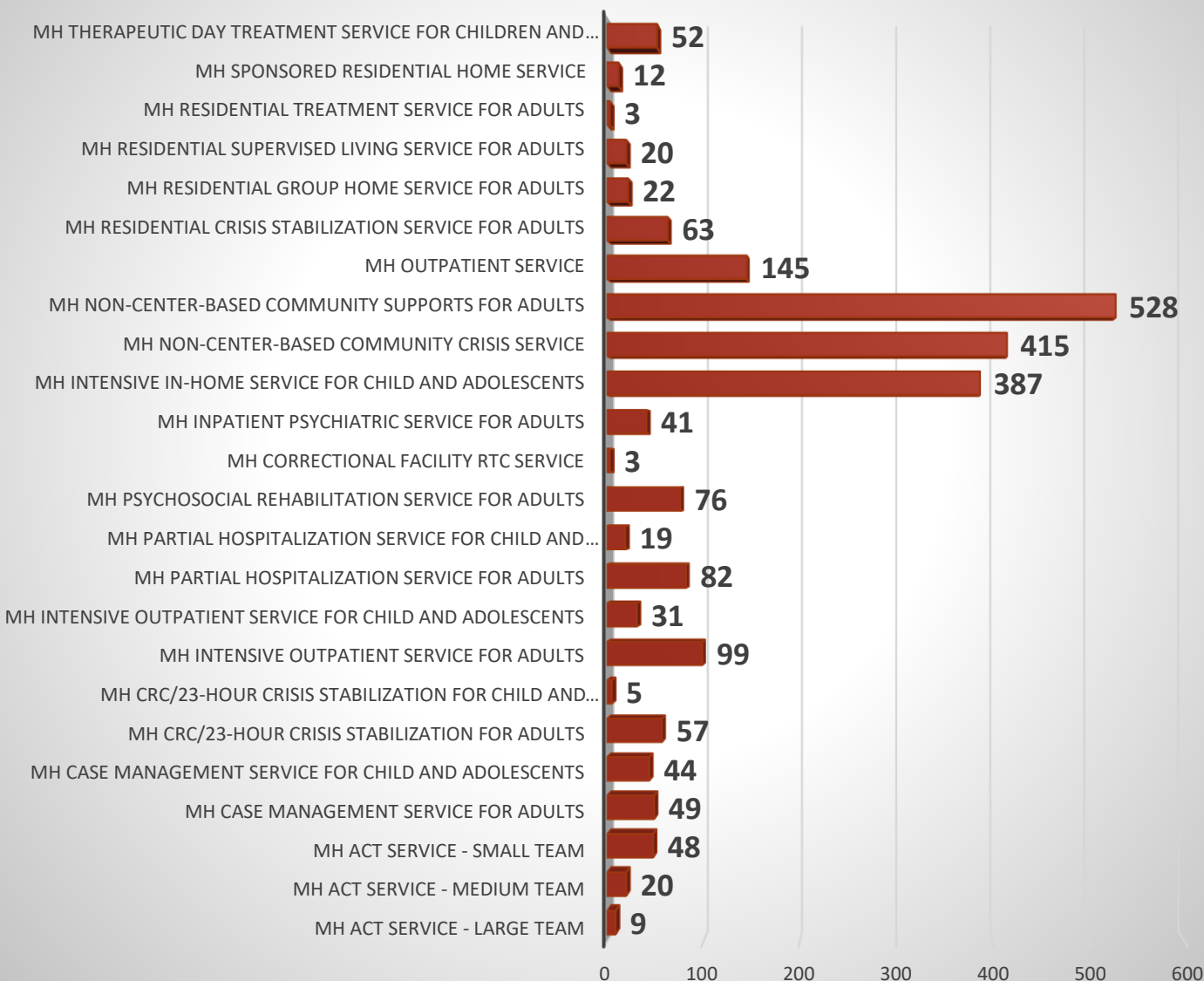
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Number of Licensed Developmental Services in Virginia as of 10/1/2026



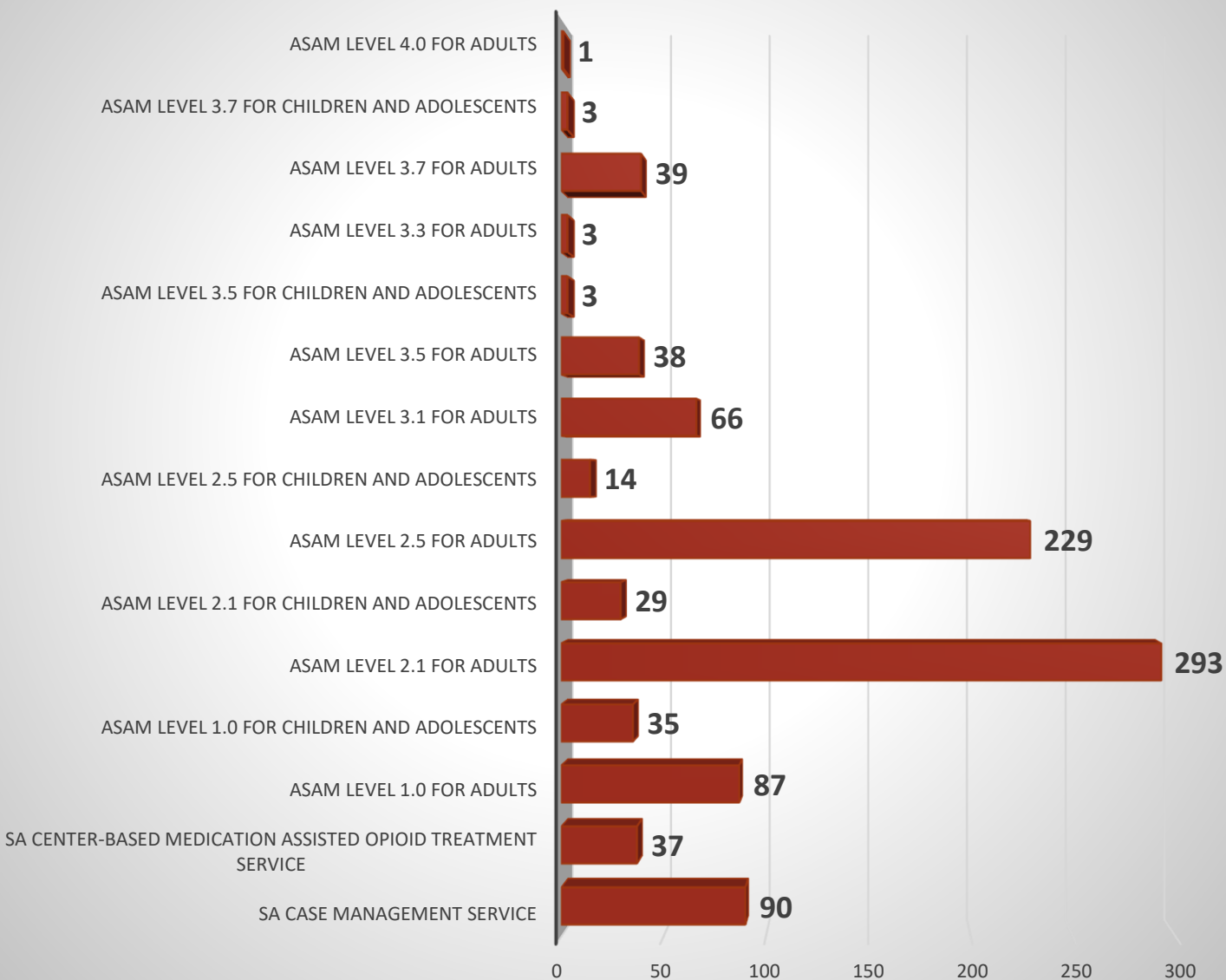
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Number of Licensed Mental Health Service in Virginia as of 10/1/2026



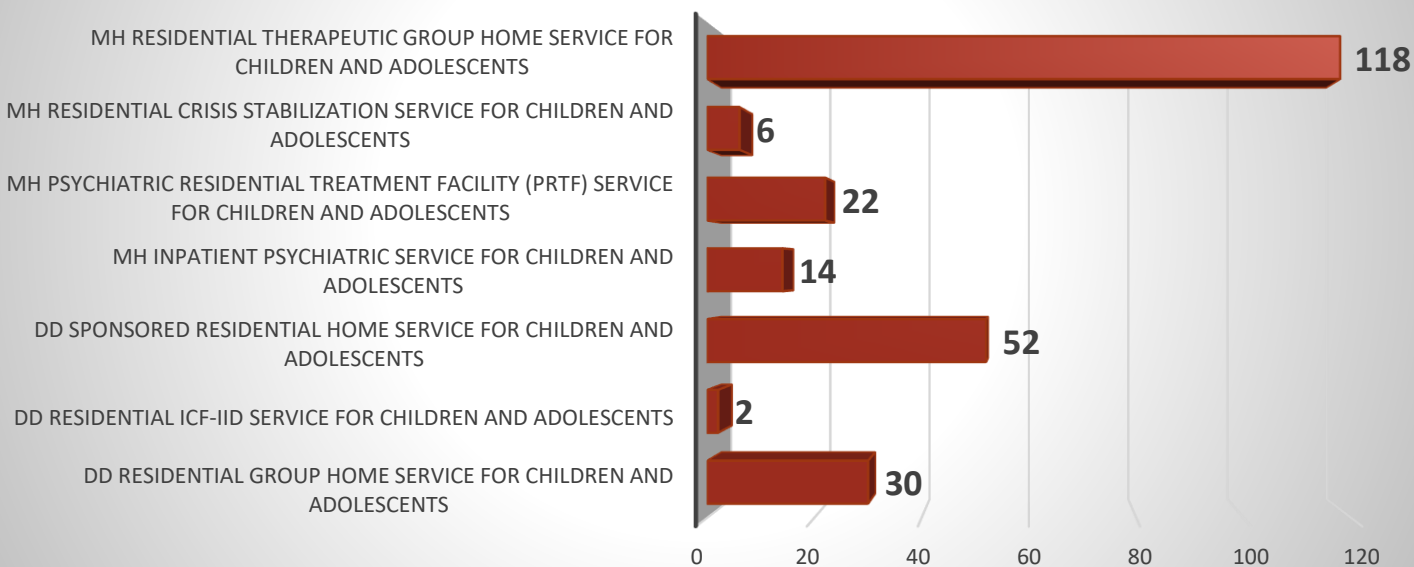
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Number of Licensed Substance Use Services in Virginia as of 10/1/2026

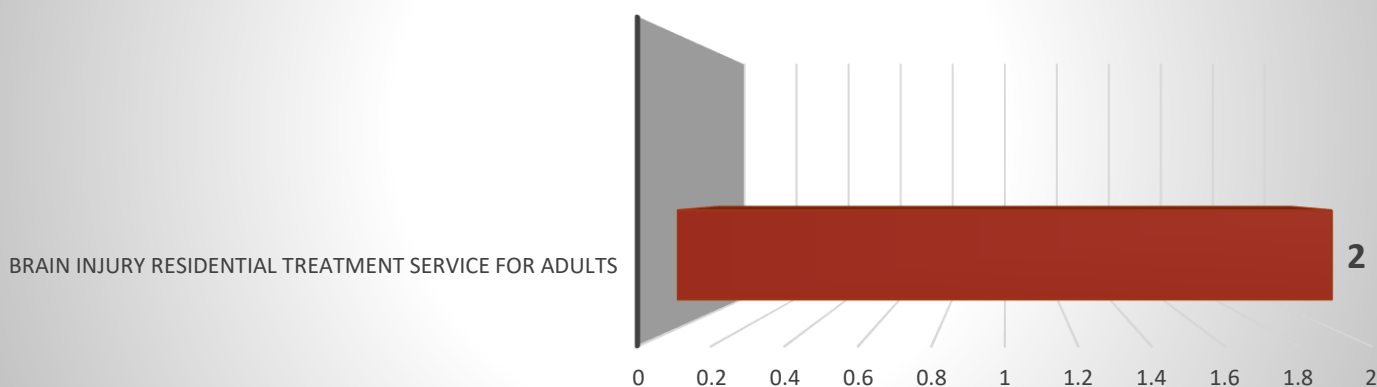


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Number of Licensed Children's Residential Services in Virginia as of 10/1/2026



Number of Brain Injury Residential Treatment Services in Virginia as of 10/1/2026



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How to reach the Office of Licensing for CONNECT Help and other Support Issues

Type of Question	Contact	To Report an Issue
Questions related to your licensed services(s)	Licensing Specialist	Please navigate to the DBHDS Office of Licensing webpage and find the Office of Licensing Staff Contact Information or find this information on the Provider Portal Dashboard,
Questions related to training	Office of Licensing Training	Please contact the Office of Licensing Training representative at: oltraining@dbhds.virginia.gov
Questions related to the CONNECT licensing system or if you are the Main Authorized Contact (MAC) in need of a password reset	CONNECT Help Desk	Please navigate to the DBHDS Office of Licensing webpage and find the CONNECT Help Desk button to report an issue or email: licensingconnectinquiry@dbhds.virginia.gov
Questions related to reporting a serious incident	Office of Licensing Incident Management Unit	Please contact the Incident Management Unit at: incident_management@dbhds.virginia.gov
Questions related to background checks	Office of Background Investigation Unit	Please contact the DBHDS Background Investigations Unit at: malinda.roberts@dbhds.virginia.gov or belinda.turner@dbhds.virginia.gov
Questions related to licensing regulations & policy inquiry	Office of Licensing Administrative Support	Please contact the Office of Licensing at: licensingadminsupport@dbhds.virginia.gov
Complaints	Office of Licensing Legal & Regulatory	Please use the CONNECT portal to submit a complaint related to a DBHDS licensed provider.
Questions related to the Computerized Human Rights Information System (CHRIS)	Delta Production	Please contact a DELTA Security Officer at: deltaprod@dbhds.virginia.gov