THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE IN MASSACHUSETTS:
Strategies to Help Grow Diversity, Resilience, and Overall Capacity

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AGENDA

• About the Foundation
• Background – The Problem
• Goals & Project Approach
• Recommendations
• Where do we go from here? What’s Next?
ABOUT THE FOUNDATION – HOW WE WORK

Our mission is to ensure equitable access to health care for all those in the Commonwealth who are economically, racially, culturally, or socially marginalized.

Grantmaking Agenda

- Fund community programs
- Help launch/expand innovative models
- Build/strengthen community capacity
- Facilitate public–private partnerships

Policy & Research Agenda

- Conduct policy research and analyses
- Provide independent, objective data
- Elevate and inform public discourse
- Convene stakeholders and build consensus
Coverage and Care

Ensure equitable access to health care for all those in the Commonwealth who are economically, racially, culturally, or socially marginalized.

Behavioral Health

Structural Racism and Inequities in Health

Strategic Focus Areas
BACKGROUND – THE PROBLEM
Initiatives to Address Workforce Challenges
Creating a Robust, Diverse, and Resilient Behavioral Health Workforce in Massachusetts

A Framework for Behavioral Health Workforce Policies
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conduct a baseline **Workforce Needs Assessment** to better understand the supply of the behavioral health workforce, including demographics, and specific workforce gaps.

2. Establish a **Behavioral Health Workforce Center** with a charter to improve the supply, distribution, competency, and diversity of the workforce.

3. Ensure that **payment for behavioral health services is equal to payment for similar services across all payers** in Massachusetts given the impact of reimbursement on the workforce.

4. Develop and fund a **10-year behavioral health workforce strategy** to grow the behavioral health professional workforce pipeline and address the shortage and maldistribution of providers.

5. Pursue a multipronged campaign to dramatically **expand the paraprofessional workforce** (e.g., peers, community health workers [CHWs], recovery specialists), including ensuring that they are paid a living wage, have opportunities for career advancement, and can obtain insurance reimbursement.

6. Create a **system of social supports** for all members of the behavioral health workforce.

7. Fund an **in-depth evaluation of the impact of telehealth on the behavioral health workforce**.
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7. Fund an in-depth evaluation of the impact of telehealth on the behavioral health workforce.
RECOMMENDATION:
CONDUCT BASELINE WORKFORCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- Prevalence and/or risk of BH conditions across the state
- Descriptive features of the workforce (demographics)
- Counts and distribution of providers by provider type and employment status
- Distribution of providers by employment status as compared to needs of the population
- Underlying causes behind challenges to recruitment, retention, distribution, and diversity of BH workforce
- Current licensure policies and any barriers they present
- Impact of COVID-19, telehealth, and other payment/policy shifts on BH providers
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Examples from the Field:
- George Washington University Fitzhugh Mullan Institute for Health Workforce Equity: Behavioral Health Workforce Tracker
- Behavioral Health Workforce Report to the Oregon Health Authority and State Legislature
RECOMMENDATION:
DEVELOP & FUND A 10-YEAR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE STRATEGY

Components of 10-Year Strategy for Growing Behavioral Health Workforce

- Provide financial incentives to build the pipeline, including those that reduce barriers to entry and the financial burden of training
- Develop programs to encourage interest in behavioral health professions
- Continue to monitor strategies to address maldistribution of providers

Examples from the Field
- Area Health Education Centers (AHECs)
- HRSA’s Centers of Excellence Program
- SAMHSA’s Minority Fellowship Program
RECOMMENDATION:

ESTABLISH A BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE CENTER

Examples from the Field

- Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska
- Illinois Behavioral Health Workforce Center

Behavioral Workforce Center

- Set and update a research evaluation agenda
- Act as state’s data hub and monitor, analyze, and report on workforce trends
- Act as centralized resource for TA and identification of best practices
- Serve as resource to funders and policy and research entities
QUESTIONS

Reports referenced in today’s presentation available at: https://www.bluecrossmafoundation.org/

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