

Nevada Mental Health Workforce Education and Development Network

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Problem Statement: Nevada has prevalence rates of mental illness and substance abuse at or above national averages. We are also ranked last or in the bottom five states with regards to number of professionals per capita across multiple mental health disciplines. This creates barriers to accessing needed mental health, substance abuse, and co-occurring disorders treatment in Nevada's urban, rural, and frontier communities.

Proposal: Create a statewide network of partners from education, employers, community groups, policy makers, and state entities to increase the number of mental health professionals in Nevada through development of an education and training pipeline. This model would be based on the Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska (BHECN) from the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Details: Broadly defined, the network would be constructed with various entry points into the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE). These entry points would be accessible to Nevada residents ("trainees") who are interested in mental health careers and need corresponding education or training. Pathways to education (i.e., certification, two- or four-year degrees, graduate degrees) and employment in Nevada would be created to guide trainees through the needed steps based on their entry point. Additionally, regularly scheduled regional and statewide workshops/conferences would be used to provide training and promote collaboration to trainees and established professionals. A mentoring component is also recommended to connect trainees to established Nevada professionals to offer "real world" experience and support.

Key entry points would be: 1) high school juniors and seniors; 2) students in 2- and 4-year higher education institutions; 3) enrollees in healthcare-related certificate programs; 4) users of workforce development services; and 5) workers in entry-level mental health and health care positions.

Pathways would detail education and/or Nevada licensure requirements needed for various mental health professions, and list the degree or certificate programs available in Nevada to complete their training. A mentorship component would introduce trainees to mental health professionals in their geographic locations. Not only would mentors help to educate trainees about the various professions and benefits of working in Nevada, they could also serve as future employers of trainees.

Workshops and conferences would provide advertisement for the network as well as serve as opportunities for established professionals to earn continuing education credits needed to maintain their Nevada licensure. Workshops targeted at high school students would educate them about mental health professions and career opportunities in Nevada.

An internet-based statewide mental health jobs board is also recommended to act as a central repository for Nevada employers to post all mental health openings. Mental health workforce data will be collected at multiple points throughout the network.