

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDED LEGISLATIVE ISSUE FOR 2021

System: Behavioral Health & Substance Use Disorder
Subject: Workforce Shortages
Submitted by: Dr. Paul Simeone (Lee Health) & Stacey Cook (SalusCare)

1. Please indicate #1 for Primary System and #2 for Secondary System that are most appropriate for this issue:

- Aging
- Behavioral Health (Mental Health and Substance Abuse)
- Child Welfare
- Children and Youth
- Criminal Justice (including Juvenile Justice)
- Developmental Disabilities
- Early Learning (Infant/Toddler/Pre-/VPK) & Education (K-12)
- Health Care
- Homelessness

2. Please indicate which is the most appropriate category for this issue:

- Budgetary: A new issue with known fiscal impact or a change in existing Legislation that will have fiscal impact.
- Substantive: Modification of existing Legislation.
(check one below)
 - With possible fiscal impact
 - With no fiscal impact
- New Legislation with no fiscal impact.

3. Please describe your legislative proposal. If applicable, please cite which statute(s) the proposal affects.

We (Community BH Leaders) urge you to support the following activities regarding the current Qualified Behavioral Health (substance use/mental health) workforce shortage. Nearly one in five persons has some type on behavioral health condition in the United States. And the disease burden of substance use/mental health was higher than for any other condition in 2015, Journal of the American Medical Association.

Collier and Lee Counties, including the United States/Florida are experiencing and will continue to experience a Qualified Behavioral Health workforce shortage.

It has been well documented that the workforce (psychiatrists, advanced nursing practitioners, addiction counselors, licensed mental health practitioners, peer support) shortage is occurring because of

- an aging out workforce
- low reimbursement rates
- low wages
- increase in military personnel seeking treatment in the private sector
- law enforcement is in process of hiring licensed and master level personnel
- schools are in process of hiring licensed and master level personnel
- increase opioid use
- more people are seeking substance use/ mental health treatment
- greater awareness of substance use/mental health conditions.

This impacts community based programs, criminal justice, emergency rooms, inpatient/outpatient, prevention, and schools. There is no quick fix to staffing shortages.

COVID has impacted the safety of delivering health care to all segments of the population. Many are feeling the economic impact.

- The workforce is subject to illness
- Individuals feel safer seeking assistance through telehealth
- There has been an increase in demand for behavioral health services

Legislative proposal:

- Offer a pilot program through the Master's program at FGCU (e.g. Kids' Minds Matter scholarship program offers \$5K to 20 graduate students over a year who are interested in working with kids.)
- Greater flexibilities for telehealth laws
- Improve student loan forgiveness programs for behavioral health (partial/full loan forgiveness for those serving underserved areas over a 3-5yr term).
- Increase rapid adoption of new and evolving practices and technologies
- Expand use of telehealth, it expands the workforce

Sources: Center for Integrated Health Solutions (CIHS), Health & Human Services HHS), Health Resources & Services Administrator (HRSA), National Council for Behavioral Health, SAMHSA

4. Describe the specific problem or challenge that will be addressed by this legislative proposal. Be specific about the impact on Lee/Collier County/statewide. Include local and state data that supports the problem or challenge. Quantify any fiscal impact, if possible. (Reasonable estimates are fine.)

FBHA Workforce Stats:

- Seventy-seven percent (77%) of Florida counties are underserved, and fifty-five percent (55%) have a "serious shortage" of child, adolescent and adult psychiatrists.
- With projected gaps in the psychiatrist workforce needed to meet demand expected to widen, additional mental health professionals will play an increasingly critical role in ensuring greater access to psychiatric care.
- Expanded use of additional providers who can release a Baker Act is a necessary strategy in the face of the declining number of psychiatrists per 100,000 populations at the national level. * this is in reference to making regulatory change to permit APRN's to 1. Examine a patient upon admission to a receiving facility AND 2. Approve a patient to be discharged from a receiving facility...if the facility is owned and operated by a nationally accredited community mental health center who receives state funding. (FBHA Survey Data)

Florida Mental Health Workforce Shortage Stats:

- Total Designations - 204
- Geographic Area - 22
- Population Group - 40
- Facility - 142
- Population of Designated HPSA's - 6,387,811
- Percent of Need Met – 16.92%
- Practitioners Needed to Remove Designations – 388 (HRSA)

- **750:1** Ratio of Population to Mental Health Providers
- Suicide is the **2nd** leading cause of death for **10-24yr** olds

5. Identify the interested/impacted parties and whether they would likely support or oppose your proposal. For instance, are other Lee/Collier County agencies affected? Are counties, regional agencies, professional associations, interest groups, and/or state agencies affected?

All behavioral health and substance use disorder providers within Lee, Collier and surrounding counties are impacted by workforce shortages.

6. Has this issue been proposed before? If so, what was the outcome? If it did not succeed, why?

Behavioral health and substance use provider workforce shortages is not a new issue and is deeply impacted by cost of living and low/outdated reimbursement rates. This shortage is felt across multiple levels of BH & SUD support and services.

7. Is this a collaborative Issue involving more than one agency? If so, indicate which agency is the Lead Agency.

Yes. Please see below for a listing of all organizations that have specifically offered their support to this community collaborative and legislative priorities.

- Lee Health**
- SalusCare**
- Healthcare Network**
- David Lawrence Center**
- Park Royal**
- Coalition for a Drug-Free SWFL**
- Hazelden Betty Ford**
- David Lawrence Center**
- Florida Behavioral Health Association**
- Chrysalis Health**
- Public Defender, 20th Judicial Circuit**
- The Hunger & Homeless Coalition of Collier County**
- Hope Clubhouse**
- Valerie's House**

8. Primary Contact Information: (Representative of Agency or Group. This person, or a designated individual very familiar with the Issue, must attend and present the Issue at the Legislative Summit)

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