



Developing a Better Understanding

APPRECIATING THOSE THAT BRING HELP & HOPE TO THOSE IN NEED

-Workforce data show a 353% increase in demand for behavioral health treatment between 2013 and 2019.

-By 2023, it's projected that there will be a 15% increase in demand for addiction counselors, 13% increase in demand for mental health counselors, and a 12% increase in demand for social workers.

-It's estimated that 160 million Americans live in areas with mental health professional shortages with over 8,000 more professionals needed to ensure an adequate supply.

-The percentage of psychologists who reported not being able to meet the demand rose from 30% in 2020 and 41% in 2021, to 46% in 2022.

-In 2021, fewer than half of people with a mental illness were able to access timely care; those with substance use disorders were even less likely.

*Sources:
American Psychological Association
The Bureau of Health Workforce
The Commonwealth Fund
The Ohio Council*

With overdose and mental health rates reaching the highest numbers on record in the past couple of years, it's important to remember to pause and celebrate the vital players of the health system and continuum of care: mental health and addiction workers. With rising demand, providers of community-based behavioral health care have noted high wait times for services due to severe, prolonged, and worsening shortages of front-line behavioral health staff in clinical, medical, and support roles. This increased demand is reflected in the number of clinics at or beyond capacity—particularly in rural Ohio. Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) are a designation used by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to identify geographic regions and populations with limited health care providers in primary care, dental health, or mental health. Seventy-six percent of the counties in Ohio are mental health HPSAs.

Ohio's behavioral health workforce includes a broad array of highly educated, trained, and licensed/credentialed professionals. These include psychiatrists, nurses, advanced practice nurses, psychologists, social workers, counselors, marriage and family therapists, and chemical dependency counselors as well as many trained paraprofessional staff. These practitioners, many of whom are required to attain a master's degree or higher to practice in the field, specialize in the treatment of children and adolescents, older adults, or people involved in the criminal or juvenile justice systems that experience mental health or substance use disorders. Peer supporters, who utilize their lived experience to help serve others, also play a critical role in our care system. And yet, Ohio is ranked 26th in behavioral health workforce availability with a ratio of 380 individuals for every one provider. Data suggests that this will not be enough to meet future needs.

The implications of this workforce shortage are grave for Ohioans with acute and chronic behavioral health needs. Clinical staff are proving difficult to find, easy to lose, and costly to replace. Furthermore, turnover in this work has a human cost as relationships with patients are severed and rebuilt time and time again. With behavioral health providers stretched to their limit, many Ohioans are going without treatment or seeking it from hospital emergency rooms. Workers experiencing burnout often feel exhausted and cynical. Working in a distressing environment can strain a person's physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. Workers with burnout are more likely to experience mental health conditions like anxiety and depression. Burnout can also impact employee retention. Workers experiencing burnout may be less engaged at work and choose to leave their job or their profession altogether.

Appreciation is not just about extending compliments or showering praises on people. It is way beyond that. Behavioral health caregivers work rigorously to ensure that people get the care and treatment that they need. They sacrifice their time, comfort, and, at times, even their own emotional and mental well-being to help others. As such, we need to appreciate them in ways that highlight the depths and extent of their contributions to our well-being. Personal gratitude is a great way to help support and honor mental health and addiction workers but take it one step further and raise awareness for what they do. Show how important they are in times of crisis, and that they need support from everyone to maintain their own health.

Also take steps to encourage individuals who work in mental health and addiction services to manage their own physical and mental health. If possible, activities like exercising and meditating can play a large part in improving their mental health. Besides physical activity, helping to ensure these service workers take steps to maintain good health and practice positive coping strategies for stress will decrease their chance of burnout. While the hours are long and the work is difficult, there are many passionate and dedicated behavioral health workers committed to their loved ones and their communities. During this week of appreciation let us all take a moment to recognize, thank and appreciate the mental health and addiction service workers in our lives and communities. Even the smallest act can create a significant impact on their work and lives. So, let us all extend a little kindness and gratitude, celebrating the behavioral health providers who silently work to make a difference.



What Can I Do To Help?

If someone is a caregiver to a person with a mental illness, here are some ways to provide support:

- **Listen while they vent about difficulties at work or their own feelings**
- **Help with chores around the house, grocery shopping, and anything else that will reduce their daily burdens & stresses**
- **Chatting with them online or over the phone if physical contact isn't possible**
- **Distracting them with lighthearted news, stories, and other events**
- **Give them appreciation for the job that they do and validate their feelings whenever possible**

Source: *Constellation Behavioral Health*

Sources: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
Comprehensive Counseling LCSW
Bureau of Health Workforce

Constellation Behavioral Health
The Ohio Council
American Psychological Association

National Association for Addiction Professionals
Health Resources & Services Administration
The Commonwealth Fund

Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities

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