

North Dakota Behavioral Health Workforce: Next Steps

Proposed Action Steps

Fact Sheet

North Dakota has been improving the behavioral health workforce situation for decades in the face of local and national workforce and behavioral health trends that have impacted the workforce environment: population changes, the pandemic, and economic conditions. But because of its history and the accompanying track record of success, North Dakota is well-positioned to take the next steps to address behavioral health care workforce issues in 2023 and beyond.

The report—*North Dakota Behavioral Health Workforce: Next Steps*—is the result of a collaborative project of the Aim 7 Committee and the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education’s Behavioral Health’s Behavioral Health Program (WICHE BHP) with multiple objectives: research of past and current behavioral health workforce efforts; key stakeholder interviews; a Summit with community stakeholders; and, a draft strategic plan and recommendations. This has resulted in identification of the following:

Key Takeaways

- A. **Visible and tangible commitment** across the state and in local communities.
- B. **Too few dedicated people**, organizations, and agencies working on planning and implementation, very often without any funding or resources.
- C. Attention must be paid to **needs of, and impacts on, local communities**, particularly in rural and tribal areas.
- D. Initiatives must have a **comprehensive, multi-level, systemic approach**.
- E. **Consider similarities and differences** between mental health and substance use/substance abuse/addiction workforce, as well as public and private.
- F. **Design impact for the entire ‘pipeline’**, from primary school through retirees/career changers—and across the entire continuum of care.
- G. **Leverage existing efforts, initiatives, and collaboratives** by adding or enhancing behavioral health workforce components.
- H. **Sufficient resources will be critical** to achieving success in any efforts.
- I. **Time is of the essence** to take advantage of—or mitigate against—workforce and employment trends.

WICHE BHP Recommendations

1. ***Fully fund and resource a ‘backbone’ organization to lead behavioral health workforce initiatives in North Dakota (Proposed Action Steps: 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.5, and 6.6)***
2. ***Design and field ‘pipeline’ and workforce costs needs assessment/gaps analyses (Proposed Action Steps 2.1, 3.1, 4.7, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, and 6.3)***
3. ***Enhance existing recruitment programs and create new ones (Proposed Action Steps 2.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 4.2)***
4. ***Collect, review, and report on behavioral health workforce-related licensure regulations, policies, and procedures (Proposed Action Steps 1.1, 1.2, and 4.3)***
5. ***Finalize and implement a behavioral health workforce strategic plan***