

# NATIONAL SEARCH PROSPECTUS

Vice President, Behavioral Health



Anthem Executive

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**The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education** (WICHE, pronounced “wit-chee”) seeks a dynamic, effective, and forward-thinking leader to join its senior leadership team as its next Vice President, Behavioral Health (VPBH).

Reporting to the President, the Vice President, Behavioral Health provides executive leadership for WICHE’s Behavioral Health Program, overseeing a substantial portfolio of policy, research, and technical assistance initiatives that serve the West and Pacific jurisdictions. The Vice President helps ensure the program’s continued strength and relevance by advancing mission-driven work, staying attuned to developments in the behavioral health field, and anticipating emerging needs and opportunities across the region. Building on WICHE’s longstanding commitment to regional collaboration and service, this leader will steward and strengthen a program with deep roots in the region while helping position it for the future.

The VPBH leads all operations of the Behavioral Health Program, which functions as a financially self-supporting unit within WICHE. This includes developing and managing the WICHE BHP’s budget; leading and mentoring staff across multiple behavioral health projects; setting strategic and programmatic priorities; securing and stewarding external funding; and establishing performance expectations and accountability measures to ensure high-quality, impactful work. The VPBH is a member of WICHE’s senior leadership team and helps guide organization-wide strategy and decision-making.

This position is based in Boulder, Colorado, and is not a remote role. Regular onsite presence at WICHE’s office is expected.

## THE ORGANIZATION

Since 1953, the **Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education** (WICHE) has been strengthening higher education, workforce development, and behavioral health throughout the region. From promoting high-quality, affordable postsecondary education to helping the West get the most from its technology investments and addressing behavioral health challenges, WICHE improves lives across the region through innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy.

The [WICHE region](#) includes 15 Western states (Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawai’i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming) and the U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States (American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Republic of Palau). WICHE’s [48 commissioners](#) are appointed by the governors of the 15 Western states and, in the case of the U.S. Pacific Territories and Freely Associated States, the presidents of the three sovereign nations. Commission activities are funded in part through annual dues paid by participating states and the Pacific Island jurisdictions, and in part through memberships, grants, and sponsorships.

One of four regional interstate higher education compacts in the United States, WICHE was created as a body corporate and an agency of each compacting state and territory through the [Western Regional Education Compact](#). WICHE functions not only as an interstate compact but is also recognized by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code.



## Mission

WICHE works collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all residents of the West. By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy among states and institutions, WICHE strengthens higher education's contributions to the region's social, economic, and civic life.

## The Behavioral Health Program

WICHE's [Behavioral Health Program \(BHP\)](#) is a recognized leader in behavioral health workforce development, technical assistance, and applied research. For nearly seven decades, the program has partnered with states, Pacific Island jurisdictions, and stakeholders to strengthen behavioral health systems through practical, state-informed solutions that expand access to care, improve system performance, and build a responsive workforce, particularly in rural and remote areas.

With a staff of approximately 25 professionals, supported by a national network of consultants and subject matter experts, the BHP works closely with states, Pacific Island jurisdictions, federal agencies, tribes, and higher education institutions to advance high-quality behavioral health systems across the West.

The program's work is guided by two core goals: helping states and Pacific jurisdictions meet the behavioral health needs of their residents and strengthening a prepared and responsive workforce. To achieve these goals, the BHP focuses on three priority areas:

- **Systems improvement**, partnering directly with states and Pacific jurisdictions to strengthen behavioral health systems and service delivery
- **Workforce development**, supporting assessment, planning, and implementation of strategies to address workforce needs
- **Research, data, and evaluation**, generating actionable insights to inform policy and practice

The BHP manages a large, dynamic portfolio supported by federal and state grants and contracts, with more than 40 active funding agreements spanning multiple years. This work engages partners across every WICHE state and in several Pacific jurisdictions, reflecting the program’s broad reach and reputation for trusted, high-impact work.

Across this portfolio, the BHP provides consultation, training, and technical assistance to support the implementation of evidence-based practices and continuous quality improvement. The program has particular expertise in adapting these approaches for rural and remote communities and in developing state-specific tools for program fidelity and performance review. Its work spans key priorities such as workforce development, suicide prevention, integrated care, policy analysis, and system design, and includes multistate collaborations, applied research, and system-level technical assistance.

The program also convenes and supports regional networks that strengthen collaboration and shared learning. Since 1985, the Western States Decision Support Group (WSDSG) has served as an information-sharing network for behavioral health data and evaluation professionals across WICHE states and territories. WSDSG provides a forum for ongoing collaboration through regular convenings, including quarterly discussions, an annual meeting with training and presentations, and targeted workgroups addressing emerging issues in behavioral health data, reporting, and system evaluation.

The BHP is further supported by an active Behavioral Health Advisory Council that helps shape the program’s programmatic and strategic direction. The Council ensures representation of the public behavioral health service system in setting policies, objectives, and priorities, and advocates for financial and participatory support of the program. Together with its advisory structures, partners, and funders, the program is well-positioned to sustain its strong legacy while advancing innovative, forward-looking approaches across the region.



## Facts about WICHE

**Student Access Programs:** Approximately 52,700 students have saved a total of \$703 million in academic year (AY) 2025-26 through these programs:

- More than 49,000 undergraduate students have saved \$642 million through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE).
- Over 3,000 graduate students have saved \$46 million through the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP).
- More than 570 professional healthcare students have saved \$16 million through the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP).

**Cost-savings Partnerships:** WICHE offers pre-negotiated student health and technology contracts to colleges and universities, K-12 school districts, state and local governments, and education-related nonprofits through a cost-savings program with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC). Last year, participating entities saved an average of 9% (approximately \$9.0 million total) compared with other purchasing options.

**Trusted Research, Data, and Policy Analysis:** WICHE's team of experts and researchers study issues like workforce needs, student success, and higher education affordability at the institution, state, regional, and even national level. For example, released every four years since 1979, WICHE's analysis about high school graduation projections, *Knocking at the College Door*, is an essential resource for policymakers, decision-makers, researchers, and planners in education and workforce development, and is regularly cited by major news outlets like NPR, *Forbes*, *Yahoo News*, CBS, Bloomberg, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and more.

**Innovation:** Housed within WICHE, WCET – the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies – is the leader in the practice, policy, and advocacy of digital learning in higher education. WCET is a member-driven organization that brings together colleges, universities, organizations, and companies to collectively improve the quality and reach of digital learning programs.

**Pacific Island Partnership:** Since 2023, all eligible Pacific Island jurisdictions in the West have passed the necessary legislation to be a member of the WICHE region. Pacific residents can access WICHE's tuition savings programs, workforce development support, behavioral health programs, and other resources.

**Visionary Leadership Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow:** WICHE is looking forward to celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2028, representing the legacy its founders envisioned in the 1950s and signifying its continued commitment to building opportunity through regional collaboration and resource sharing in matters related to higher education and workforce now and for years to come.



# THE POSITION

## Key Responsibilities

Responsibilities for the VPBH include:

- Providing strategic and executive leadership for WICHE's Behavioral Health Program, ensuring alignment with organizational priorities and long-term regional impact
- Translating strategy into execution by setting priorities, aligning resources, establishing performance expectations, and driving implementation across programs and initiatives
- Leading a complex, multi-project portfolio and a team of approximately 25 professionals, fostering accountability, collaboration, and high performance
- Directing financial strategy and sustainability, including budget oversight, revenue generation, and long-term financial planning for a self-funded unit
- Leading project and initiative development and external engagement efforts, including securing and stewarding federal and state grants, contracts, and philanthropic investments
- Providing thought leadership in behavioral health policy, systems design, and workforce development, positioning WICHE as a trusted partner to states, Pacific Island jurisdictions, and national stakeholders
- Overseeing high-level stakeholder convenings and multistate collaborations, ensuring strategic value and measurable outcomes
- Serving as a senior representative and trusted advisor to federal and state agencies, higher education leaders, foundations, tribal organizations, and other partners
- Advancing regional and national initiatives related to emerging behavioral health priorities, including workforce shortages, crisis systems, integrated care, and rural and frontier health
- Building and leading a strong leadership team, including recruiting, mentoring, and developing senior staff
- Representing WICHE externally through speaking, policy engagement, and strategic partnerships at the state, regional, and national levels.



## Required Qualifications

- An advanced degree in behavioral health, public health, policy, or a related field (doctorate preferred), and a minimum of 10 years of progressively responsible leadership experience administering and managing complex behavioral health or public mental health programs, including experience operating within and across federal and state systems
- Experience navigating complex intergovernmental environments, including

- coordination across state agencies, federal partners, and multistate initiatives
- Demonstrated expertise in key behavioral health policy and systems areas, such as systems of care, Medicaid, and managed care delivery models, service outcomes, workforce development, and responsive care
- Demonstrated success in securing and stewarding external funding, including developing funding strategies, leading proposal development, and maintaining federal, state, and/or foundation-funded programs
- Experience in behavioral health policy analysis, program evaluation, or applied research, including at least five years of experience using qualitative and/or quantitative methods to inform systems improvement and decision-making
- Commitment to consumer- and family-centered approaches in behavioral health policy and program development
- Deep understanding of the Western U.S. context, including frontier and rural challenges, state policy environments, and the role of Interstate collaboration
- Demonstrated experience working with diverse populations in behavioral health systems, including engagement with community-based and tribal partners
- Strong communication and influence skills, including the ability to translate complex policy and research into clear, actionable guidance for policymakers, practitioners, and behavioral health leaders
- Demonstrated ability to lead and collaborate across sectors, including work with state agencies, federal partners, higher education institutions, researchers, and governing or advisory bodies
- Proven ability to lead and manage teams, including supervising staff, delegating effectively, and driving high performance

## Preferred Areas of Expertise

The ideal candidate will bring expertise in several of the following areas:

- **Behavioral health systems and policy**, including public behavioral health systems at the federal, state, and local levels; Medicaid and managed care; and policy and financing mechanisms such as waivers
- **Priority behavioral health domains**, including serious mental illness, substance use disorder, suicide prevention, crisis systems (e.g., 988, mobile crisis, Crisis Now), and integrated behavioral health and primary care
- **Service delivery models and populations**, including rural, frontier, and remote systems; Indigenous and tribal behavioral health systems (including Indian Health Service and 638 systems); and familiarity with Pacific Island contexts
- **Research, evaluation, and workforce development**, including program evaluation, needs assessment, community-engaged research, policy analysis, and behavioral health workforce initiatives

- **Leadership and implementation**, including strategic planning, facilitation, multi-entity collaboration, grant administration, and experience as a principal investigator or co-principal investigator
- **Federal and national engagement**, including experience working with agencies such as SAMHSA, HRSA, NIH/NIMH, CMS, and related organizations

## Preferred Qualifications and Leadership Attributes

- Doctoral degree in a behavioral health, public health, policy, or related discipline
- Experience leading multi-layered teams, including supervision of senior managers
- Fiscal oversight experience involving annual budgets or revenue exceeding \$10 million
- Experience in business development, acquisition of new work, and revenue generation
- Experience working at the intersection of behavioral health and higher education, including partnerships with colleges and universities on workforce development, research, or training initiatives
- Strong professional network within behavioral health, higher education, policy, and governmental sectors
- Experience engaging with public officials, governance boards, and legislative processes
- Demonstrated ability to lead collaborative, interdisciplinary, and team-based initiatives across multiple organizations and stakeholder groups
- Strong strategic thinking, facilitation, communication, and relationship-building

## Organizational Leadership Expectations

The successful candidate will bring strong strategic, operational, and people leadership, along with the political acumen to work effectively across complex intergovernmental environments. They will build trust and engagement across diverse stakeholders while advancing behavioral health policy, research, and systems improvement in alignment with WICHE's organizational priorities.



## Salary and Benefits

This is a full-time, exempt position. The salary range is \$160,000 – \$178,000. WICHE offers a competitive benefits package that includes medical insurance with a generous employer contribution to a health savings account (HSA); dental, life, and disability insurance; flexible spending accounts (medical and dependent care); a 403(b) retirement plan with a 200% employer match on employee contributions up to 5% after six full months of employment; and paid vacation, sick and personal time, as well as paid family leave.

## Travel

The Vice President is expected to travel approximately 40%+.

# THE STATE HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY CENTER

WICHE's headquarters is located on the second floor of the State Higher Education Policy Center (SHEPC).



SHEPC (pronounced SHEP-C) is also home to the offices of two other nonprofit, higher education organizations: [National Center for Higher Education Management Systems \(NCHEMS\)](#) and [State Higher Education Executive Officers Association \(SHEEO\)](#). Featuring a learning center and meeting facilities, SHEPC promotes informal cross-fertilization of thinking, as well as a quick dissemination of information and new ideas to the organizations and policymakers they serve. SHEPC also encourages synergy in activities, both in the selection of

projects and in the concepts utilized within projects, and improved capacity for effective collaboration among the staff and members of the three organizations. Working together, the organizations provide rewarding educational experiences and opportunities for interns and graduate students.

# THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Nestled at the base of the Rocky Mountains, **Boulder, Colorado**, offers an exceptional quality of life paired with a thriving business environment, making it an ideal place to live, work, and thrive.

**Innovation and Opportunity** - Boulder is a nationally recognized hub for innovation, entrepreneurship, and research. It is home to various industries, including technology, aerospace,

natural products, clean energy, and higher education. With close proximity to the University of Colorado Boulder and several national laboratories, the city fosters a highly educated workforce and a collaborative spirit of discovery.

**Vibrant Lifestyle** - Boulder offers a rare blend of outdoor adventure and urban sophistication. Residents enjoy over 300 days of sunshine yearly, with easy access to hiking, biking, rock climbing, skiing, and more. The city's walkable downtown, Pearl Street, features boutique shopping, top-tier restaurants, art galleries, and live music venues.



**Community and Culture** - Boulder consistently ranks among the top U.S. cities for health, wellness, and overall happiness. The Boulder Valley School District is highly rated, and the city is recognized as a great place to raise a family. The community is known for their strong sense of environmental stewardship, support for local businesses, and active participation in cultural and recreational activities, with Boulder being the future home of the Sundance Film Festival beginning in 2027.

**Strategic Location** - Just 30 miles northwest of Denver and about 45 minutes from Denver International Airport, Boulder offers easy access to major transportation hubs while maintaining a small-town feel with big-city benefits.

**Thriving Surrounding Communities** - While Boulder offers an exceptional lifestyle, many of our team members choose to live in one of the many vibrant and welcoming communities nearby. From family-friendly suburbs like Louisville, Lafayette, and Superior to the scenic charm of Longmont or the convenience of Broomfield and beyond, the region provides a wide range of housing options, top-rated schools, and abundant community amenities. These towns offer a more affordable cost of living while still providing easy access to Boulder and the greater Denver metro area. Whether you're seeking great schools, outdoor recreation, cultural events, elite professional and college sports teams, or a strong sense of community, the surrounding areas offer the perfect backdrop for building a life and career.



# NOMINATIONS & APPLICATIONS

WICHE invites letters of interest and nominations to be submitted directly to the search firm, Anthem Executive. Correspondence should include a curriculum vitae and a letter of interest describing relevant experience and interest in the position. Submit materials to Michael Ballew, Scott Watson, JR Wheless, or Florene Stawowy at:

[WICHEVPBH@AnthemExecutive.com](mailto:WICHEVPBH@AnthemExecutive.com)

While applications and nominations will be accepted until a VPBH is selected, interested parties are strongly encouraged to submit their materials as soon as possible to ensure consideration. Expressing interest is the first step in receiving consideration and does not make one an applicant for the position.

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