



Building a Child Mental Health Workforce



Children's
Advocacy
ALLIANCE

Higher-education investment is key to expand the mental health workforce

Nevada Faces a Severe Youth Mental Health Crisis

Nevada's children are navigating a severe mental health **crisis** with over-reliance on emergency services and out-of-state institutions for mental and behavioral care. Nevada's overwhelming shortage of mental health professionals leaves youth in critical need of mental health screening and preventive services.

Establishing **Behavioral Health and Wellness Practitioners** (BHWP) in Nevada will help children and families address mental health needs early, resulting in better long-term outcomes and cost savings for the state. In Nevada, our existing bachelor-level programs do not fully prepare graduates to engage in real-world prevention-oriented and early intervention focused behavioral health care. Training our students to support preventive services and early intervention, including case management and systematic development are crucial for preparing our mental health workforce.

Recommendations

- Item 1: Path to licensure for the Behavioral Health and Wellness Practitioner
- Item 2: Support child behavioral and mental health training programs with the primary goal of increasing the child behavioral health workforce

Behavioral Health and Wellness Practitioner

Role of a BHWP: Short-term, evidence-based mental health support to children and families, track the child's progress, and help connect families to further care if needed. While they do not diagnose conditions, they work closely with supervising providers to monitor each child's response to support.

• Requirements to Become a BHWP:

- Be at least 18 years old with a bachelor's degree;
- Complete BHWP training and hands-on practice with supervision;
- Pass a state-approved knowledge test and background check;
- Follow behavioral health rules & regulations under Nevada law;
- Complete 20 hours of continuing education every two years to keep skills up to date.

Educational Incentives

Building the mental health workforce over 3 years include:

- BHWP programs and scholarships or apprenticeships at three universities (GBC, UNLV, UNR)
 - Bachelor's degree & micro-credential
 - Apprenticeships, scholarships
- Developing and launching an accredited child psychology internship program
- Child mental health program scholarships or apprenticeships to increase the number of trained supervisors for BHWPs

Preventing Problems Early:

BHWPs fill a gap with a specific skill set in prevention and early intervention skills to identify and help children with their mental health needs early before they reach the crisis stage.

Saving Money:

Early intervention saves taxpayer dollars by reducing the need for more expensive healthcare, special education, and juvenile justice programs down the road.

Extra Care: BHWP professionals would work as skilled extenders of licensed mental health providers to ensure children receive safe and effective support.



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