

Oregon Behavioral Health Workforce Initiatives

Like the rest of the nation, Oregon is experiencing behavioral health workforce shortages across all provider types. This fact sheet provides an overview of current efforts to address the shortage.

Governor's Behavioral Health Advisory Council

The [Governor's Behavioral Health Advisory Council](#) met in 2019 and 2020 to develop recommendations aimed at improving access to effective behavioral health services and supports for all Oregon adults and transitional-aged youth with serious mental illness or co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorders.

[Their final report](#), submitted to the Oregon legislature in October 2020, includes several recommendations to support Oregon's behavioral health workforce. They include:

- Creation of a behavioral health incentive fund for recruitment and retention of the workforce to increase the number of people of color, people from tribal communities, and rurally based people in the behavioral health workforce.
- Implementation and sustainability of culturally based practices, including promising practice and practices outside of the conventional medical model.
- Support for training the behavioral health workforce in trauma-informed care and workplaces, culturally and linguistically specific/responsive care, anti-racism, equity, interdisciplinary care (including working with peers), leadership and management development, and co-occurring disorders.
- Oregon Administrative Rule revisions to reduce provider administrative burden.

2021-2023 legislative activity

The [Governor's Requested Budget](#) includes a request to fund incentives to increase the behavioral health workforce and improve recruitment and retention.

OHA also introduced [House Bill 2086](#). If passed, it would mandate implementation of the October 2020 council recommendations to support Oregon's behavioral health workforce, and require OHA to develop recommendations on how to:

- Achieve a living wage for behavioral health workers, including peers and family support specialists, and
- Resolve pay inequities between physical and behavioral health care workers.

OHA would report the recommendations to the Oregon legislature no later than Feb 1, 2022.

For more information

Visit [OHA's Health Care Workforce Reporting website](#) for the following resources:

- OHA's Feb. 2021 report will include behavioral health workforce information for the first time.
- [March 2019 Behavioral Health Workforce Report](#)
- [April 2019 Recruitment and Retention Report](#)

The [Oregon legislature](#) also provides information about behavioral health fees and workforce bills.