



State Behavioral Health Workforce – Context & Opportunities

Background

The mission of the Indiana Mental Health Roundtable, hosted by Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, was to serve as a catalyst of change, by removing the stigma of mental health, creating easier access, building awareness, expanding education, and growing the workforce in mental health.¹ The Mental Health Summit, held in Indianapolis on May 16th, 2023, explored mental health through three session tracks: Faith, Youth, and Workforce. The Bowen Center for Health Workforce Research and Policy held a workforce breakout session entitled “State Behavioral Health Workforce: Context and Opportunities.” The interactive session explored national and state level trends and strategies used to address behavioral health workforce shortages. Attendees engaged in facilitated discussions regarding opportunities to strengthen efforts in Indiana. This brief outline’s themes and opportunities stemming from this discussion.

Session Strategy

After a brief overview of local and national behavioral health workforce strategies, attendees were asked to tap into their expertise and experience with Indiana’s behavioral health workforce and provide feedback on three main questions:

- What’s working well in the state?
- What are the biggest challenges?
- Where are opportunities that can be leveraged to address the pain points?

Approximately 150 attendees were in attendance and provided 242 responses which were self-mapped to a behavioral health workforce category. Responses were recorded and themed by behavioral health workforce researchers. Of these responses, fifty (50) identified opportunities for momentum – strategies that are working well, one hundred and thirty (130) identified challenges and sixty-two (62) identified as opportunities for future exploration. Specific feedback provided by attendees can be found in the [Appendix](#).

Findings:

An analysis of participant responses revealed several main themes. The themes below are listed in order of frequency of the response and are limited to those responses that may be considered state-level (i.e. employer-based or specific institutional responses are excluded from theming).

What is working well in Indiana?

- Passage of 2023 Senate Enrolled Act 1 to support Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics
- Expansion of telehealth access in Indiana

¹ <https://mentalhealthroundtable.org/about/>



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- Indiana's participation in the mental health licensure compacts ([PSYPact](#), [Counseling Compact](#))
- Recognition, acknowledgement, and attention on behavioral health workforce issues in recent years with increased state government and legislature attention

What are the biggest challenges?

- Low compensation for behavioral health professionals or inability to access reimbursement for some profession types (social work)
- The licensure process is time consuming and challenging to understand, with various certification bodies (ICAADA and PLA/Behavioral Health and Human Services Licensing Board), each license with a unique set of requirements, and confusion on how to access reciprocity for individuals with out-of-state licenses looking to obtain Indiana license
- Unclear career pathway opportunities within behavioral health, starting with peer support workers
- Reliance on unpaid internships to obtain experience requirements for licensure
- A lack of quality supervision opportunities to support behavioral health workforce trainees

What opportunities could be explored to further progress?

- Expansion of scholarships, grants, and loan forgiveness programs to support pipeline, recruitment, and retention in areas of need
- Support the PLA in initiatives to modernize, streamline, and consolidate licensing processes
- Continued expansion of hotlines (ex. [988](#) and Be Happy) as access points and provider support
- Expand NextLevel Jobs to include additional behavioral health professions, with access to Workforce Ready grants
- Creation of more opportunities for bachelor-level behavioral health providers
- Development of peer mentorship, internships, and apprenticeships for high school and post-secondary students
- Incentivize law enforcement and EMS to become behavioral health specialists
- Allow online counseling hours and continuing education to apply towards licensure and professional development for associate-level licensees and licensed professionals

[Appendix – Respondent Feedback](#)

