

# Strong Workforce Program

## Behavioral Health Advisory Meeting Proceedings

December 10, 2020

Virtual - Zoom

### Introduction

The Los Rios Community College District, in partnership with Valley Vision, and in collaboration with Sierra College and Yuba Community College District, invests Strong Workforce funding to organize and convene Regional Advisories. The objectives of the Regional Advisories are to build strong relationships between employers, educators, and workforce that:

- Provide timely information on skills gaps and workforce needs, informing partners on major industry trend information;
- Improve the efficiency of the advisory process for educators and employers;
- Reflect a regional view of workforce needs and assets
- Provide opportunities for more systemic, ongoing engagement that includes workforce partners in key industry sectors.

Regional Advisory meetings help inform decisions on needed investments and enhancements for Career Education (CE) programs to help fill the growing demand for middle-skill positions. This meeting proceedings report includes key findings, best practices, and minutes from the Fall 2020 Health Sector Regional Advisory meeting focused specifically on careers in the mental and behavioral health industry.

Valley Vision supports a robust talent pipeline through our multiple 21st Century Workforce initiatives. We prepare our regional workforce for the future by addressing skills gaps, advancing research, aligning efforts and strengthening systems. Valley Vision's workforce efforts are supported by the Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (SETA), Golden Sierra Workforce Development Board (WDB), North Central Counties Consortium, Yolo WDB, City of Sacramento, local community college districts and others.

The Strong Workforce program provides Career Education opportunities to increase social mobility and fuel regional economies with skilled workers.

## Key Findings

- California's behavioral health workforce (BHW) is large, and comprises about 1/5 of all healthcare and community/social services jobs in the state of California. The potential growth rate is massive at the regional level, and has huge current and future demand.
- Recruiting workers into the behavioral health workforce has many barriers, however, projected investment in the incumbent workforce, and mobilization of the existing workforce will result in the most opportunity for workers.
- Job quality in the BHW sector is good, but higher wages and better benefits are awarded to members of the workforce with a Bachelor's Degree, at minimum.

## Meeting Proceedings

### **North Far North Center of Excellence - Mental and Behavioral Health Workforce Needs Assessment**

- *Note: North Far North Center of Excellence conducted in-depth labor market research regarding the mental and behavioral health workforce. This advisory report focuses on some of the key findings of the report, as well as the December 10, 2020 advisory meeting.*

[Click here to read the full report.](#)

Aaron Wilcher, Director, and Wen Sun, Project Consultant, of North Far North Center of Excellence presents data on Sacramento's mental and behavioral health workforce. The Center of Excellence found this industry to be large and fast growing, with present and future demand for workers. However, there are hiring and recruitment challenges for professional positions, and job quality concerns - including wages and benefits - for mental and behavioral health paraprofessionals. Even so, there are industry partnerships which can provide paraprofessional credentials, like standard credentials that can address job quality, and standard credentials that can provide pathways to professional roles.

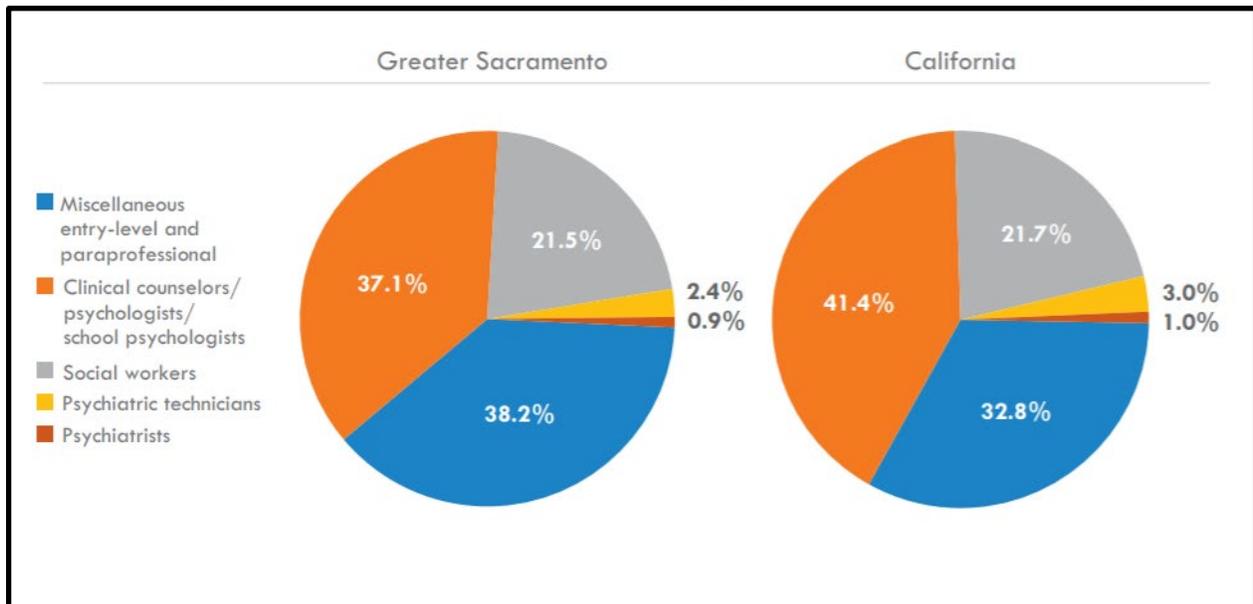
- Mental and Behavioral Health Industry Overview
  - Jobs can be organized within 3 industry sub-sectors:
    - Community Support & Referral
    - Outpatient Mental/Behavioral Health Services
    - In-Patient/Residential, Crisis, and Acute Care
  - On the following page, you will find a table which outlines some of the places of employment individuals can find jobs within these subsectors

Community Support & Referral	Outpatient Mental/Behavioral Health Services	In-Patient/Residential, Crisis, and Acute Care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Suicide crisis lines</li> <li>● Community outreach</li> <li>● ER referrals</li> <li>● Corrections</li> <li>● Counseling Centers</li> <li>● Ethnic non-profits</li> <li>● Homeless shelters</li> <li>● Foster care</li> <li>● County outreach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Telecare</li> <li>● Turning Point</li> <li>● Recovery centers</li> <li>● Wellness centers</li> <li>● WellSpace Health</li> <li>● Transition age youth programs</li> <li>● Youth and family centers</li> <li>● Ethnic non-profits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Residential treatment programs</li> <li>● Therapeutic foster care</li> <li>● Sacramento Children’s Home</li> <li>● Turning Point</li> <li>● Rehabilitation centers</li> <li>● Crestwood Sacramento Psychiatric Facility</li> <li>● New Heritage Oaks Hospital</li> </ul>

**Occupational Overview:**

- In total in California, there are currently 403,500 mental and behavioral health jobs
- In total in the Greater Sacramento region, there are 27,000 mental and behavioral health jobs
- Figure 1 (below), displays the breakdown of types of MBH jobs by job type, compared in both the Greater Sacramento area and within California.
  - A majority of jobs fall within the categories of “Miscellaneous entry-level and paraprofessional” and “Clinical counselors/psychologists/school psychologists”

**Figure 1 - Mental & Behavioral Health Job Types - Greater Sacramento vs. California**



**Job Quality - Wages & Benefits**

Social worker and psychiatrist jobs reported strong quality numbers - indicating high wages and good benefits. A majority of miscellaneous paraprofessional jobs reported wage levels of less than \$24 an

hour. Half of counselor level jobs also reported wage levels of less than \$24 a year. For psychiatric technicians, no jobs reported less than \$24 an hour in the region. According to the Brookings Institution Index, the vast majority of jobs with middle income wages and benefits required at least a Bachelor's Degree.

- Typical educational and experience qualifications for paraprofessional mental and behavioral health workers includes:
  - High School Diploma
  - 1-6 years of formal work experience in a related setting
  - College units in psychology, social work, counseling and sociology
  - Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) license/experience
  - Psychiatric technician experience

### **Demographics**

When looking at race and ethnicity, there are generally higher rates of African American workers in the mental and behavioral health sector compared to other health fields, and similar levels of Latinos within the aforementioned categories of mental and behavioral health.

### **Arising Issues in the Field: Panel Discussion**

#### **Panelists:**

- Cesar A. Castaneda - Mental Health Administrator, La Familia Counseling Center
- Christie Gonzales - Deputy Chief, WellSpace Health
- Melissa Jacobs - Division Manager, Sacramento County Behavioral Health
- Erin Johansen - CEO, Hope Cooperative

#### **Q: Did anything in the research/data surprise you?**

- Panelists noted that wages and salaries shown within the data were often low within the clinical and licensed classifications, and this data may be conflicting in certain fields - such as clinical social workers.
- Job classifications can be confusing - leaving much to be done for standardization to give a better idea of what skill levels and education levels are *really* needed for these jobs?
- Additionally, panelists noted that lived experience is important as qualification when navigating this field

#### **Q: What skills and positions are most difficult to find and fill?**

- Panelists have struggled with finding licensed workers within the county. Nursing staff is a common struggle for recruitment and retention. Additionally, many positions are in need of bicultural skills as well as bilingual skills.
- Skills that are difficult to find include:
  - Public speaking, basic introduction to some psychology/social work/human service/medical field terms, writing skills and documentation
- Additionally, personal lived experiences are unorthodox to put on a resume but are very important

**Q: Have you experienced mental health needs that have changed or intensified? How has your organization adapted in delivery of services in light of the pandemic?**

- Panelists noted that one of the biggest struggles in their field is that essential workers are mainly Latinx
  - Workers of color often face high rates of exposure and infection.
- As a result of the pandemic, many staff and patients are struggling with adjusting to technology, engaging without interpersonal connections, struggling to access services, lacking or not wanting to participate in services over fear of immigration status.
- Dual Telehealth situations:
  - Regarding case management, clients and patients do not respond as well as they do with in-person services. Areas that are very interpersonally involved, and the transition to telehealth did not go over very well. Some disengagement and a lot of despair in clients due to lessened interaction
  - Contrastingly, there was a remarkable takeoff for telehealth in more traditional mental health areas. Patients and clients very much appreciate it; the need for a MH therapy appointment can feel very transitory. When able to make a phone call, they were more likely to engage.
- Hospitals saw an increase in suicide attempts in youth
- System has become nimble in adaptability.
  - Clinicians with law enforcement did not cease operations
  - Psychiatric health facilities continue to have patients, while welfare clinicians were told to transition to telework.
  - Adult and child outpatient clinics do a hybrid of in person and telework
- Tele-health field saw reduced no-shows in the beginning of the pandemic within the adult population. On the child/youth side, it has been much harder to engage with patients/clients. Young children are especially resistant to tele-health and virtual appointments. Engagement and attention span is difficult to engage, especially among patients aged 10 years old and younger.
- Substance use services with tele-medicine has increased the ability to engage with these clients and patients.
- Crisis teams have experienced more suicide attempts and completed suicides.
- Field-based work has been difficult because workers are not equipped to work at home.
  - Not everyone has easy access to the necessary equipment needed to work at home
  - While now improved - there was resistance at the beginning of the pandemic to hospitals closing their doors and not being able to provide services.

**Q: Are you seeing candidates that are representatives of the communities you're serving? If not, what can be done to bridge that gap?**

- Current candidates closely match the community that is served. However, many organizations are in need of bilingual candidates, as language barriers are one of the most pressing issues.

- More males could be beneficial to the field, as the demographic seems to lean more towards female representatives. Additionally, more Black or African-American candidates are desired.
- Schools could be one of the best ways to connect with youth, and set up a pipeline of students. Education is also where the most effort is expended and internships have been given.
- Panelists suggest that there are micro-pockets of communities in the region that could be better addressed/targeted for support.

## Conclusion

The mental and behavioral health workforce is large, and comprises about 1/5 of all healthcare and community and social service jobs in the state of California. The growth rate is massive at the state and regional level, and is expected to have current and future demand.

Literature, interviews, and jobs postings highlight the challenge for recruitment and hiring of professional positions. For paraprofessionals, projected investment in the incumbent workforce and mobilization of the existing workforce is likely to result in the most opportunity for workers.

In general, job quality in this field is good, but the best wages and benefits are apportioned mostly to the workforce with at least a Bachelor's Degree. However, there are job quality concerns in terms of wages and benefits at the paraprofessional level.

To mitigate this, industries and schools should standardize credentials at the paraprofessional level in a way which allows for boosting job quality and for developing pathways to professional positions where wages are higher and benefits are more accessible.