

Strong Workforce Program Mental and Behavioral Health Regional Workforce Advisory Meeting Proceedings September 21, 2023 Hybrid In Person- Zoom

Introduction

The Los Rios Community College District, in partnership with Valley Vision and in collaboration with Sierra College, Yuba Community College District, and Lake Tahoe Community College, invests in Strong Workforce funding to organize and convene Regional Advisories. The objectives of the Regional Advisories are to build strong relationships between employers, educators, and the 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, including 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 2023 Regional Advisory meeting focused specifically on careers in Mental and Behavioral Health (MHB).

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, the 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

- Entry-level and Paraprofessional roles are poised for a 15% increase, translating to 1,296 jobs. Psychiatric Technicians are projected to see a 24% growth rate, accounting for 116 additional jobs. Mental and behavioral health median wage notes that the entry-level jobs in this region offer wages exceeding the median hourly wage for working adults.
- Job postings in the Greater Sacramento Subregion have increased by 22% in the last 12 months (spanning September 2022 to August 2023). More than 6,954 job postings emerged during this period, indicating robust Mental and Behavioral Health demand.
- The [Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative](#) is a five-year project valued at \$4.4 billion that enables HCAI to establish a new workforce pathway, a vital component of the Plan for Kids' Mental Health. This plan is a strategic investment by the State of California to adopt a holistic approach toward addressing all the factors that affect the mental health and overall well-being of children and youth.
- Employers value a diverse workforce, emphasizing that formal certifications are not the sole measure of qualification. The significance of soft skills, including empathy, active listening, non-verbal communication, and the need for strong written communication, precise grammar, and professional conduct in customer service was emphasized. Additionally, essential skills such as basic math, spreadsheet proficiency, leadership, project management, time management, and the importance of professional development workshops were discussed.
- Cultural competency and the incorporation of lived experiences emerged as foundational pillars in addressing the intricate and multifaceted needs of clients from diverse backgrounds. Employers acknowledged the significance of understanding and navigating the complexities of various cultures to foster trust and rapport, thereby facilitating culturally sensitive and tailored care.
- The panelists also discussed practical challenges within the profession, including burnout and administrative demands. They emphasized the importance of preparing paraprofessionals for paperwork, training requirements, and productivity expectations, underscoring the need for organizational skills and effective management of mental and behavioral health services administrative aspects. They also stressed the importance of boundaries to manage caseloads efficiently, ensure clients receive appropriate care and prevent professional burnout.
- Currently, Yolo County Office of Education, Sacramento Employment Agency and Kaiser offer free or paid training opportunities in mental health careers.

Meeting Proceedings

Welcome and Introduction

Hilary Tellesen, Project Leader at Valley Vision, and Diangelo Andrews, Project Associate at Valley Vision, welcomed attendees and introduced the event. Tellesen emphasized the importance of collaboration between colleges and employers in providing quality and relevant workforce training for individuals interested in working in the mental and behavioral health sector.

Keynote Speakers

Behavioral Health Workforce Opportunities

The first address by Anne Powell, a Program Specialist II at North/Far North Health within the Policy Section of the Office of Health Workforce Development, discussed the Department of Health Care Access and Information's (HCAI) initiatives for developing the behavioral health workforce. Powell emphasized the department's role in standing up funds for affordable, equitable, and quality healthcare, especially in medically underserved areas facing language barriers.

Powell elaborated on the office's financial support programs across three main categories:

- ❖ expanding educational capacity in organizations
- ❖ providing scholarships and loan repayment for aspiring health professionals
- ❖ supporting institutions dedicated to strengthening the healthcare workforce pipeline.

During the discussion, Powell highlighted the [Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative](#), a five-year project valued at \$4.4 billion. This initiative will enable the HCAI to establish a new workforce pathway in schools, primary care facilities, and online platforms to serve youth. It is an integral component of the [Master Plan for Kids' Mental Health](#), which represents a strategic investment by the State of California to address all factors that impact the mental health and overall well-being of children and youth.

In addition to grants for educational organizations to enhance workforce capabilities, Powell highlighted funding opportunities for training programs for primary care practitioners to address addiction and psychotic conditions. HCAI initiatives include incentive programs like scholarships and loan repayments. Powell also introduced the [Health Professions Pathway Program](#) (HPPP), which supports students from underrepresented backgrounds through internships, post-undergraduate fellowships, and post-baccalaureate programs.

Powell emphasized the importance of providing strategic funding opportunities for colleges, students, and professionals to help them achieve their educational and career goals. She presented a range of HCAI initiatives and financial support programs designed to cultivate a diverse and highly skilled behavioral health workforce that aims to make quality healthcare accessible to underserved areas.

Lived Experience and Skills in Mental Health Careers

During the second keynote speech Christie Gonzales, Chief Program Officer at WellSpace Health, shared the organization's extensive work in the Sacramento region. WellSpace Health provides mental and behavioral health services, including primary healthcare, women's health, pediatrics, and dental care.

Gonzales's keynote address focused on the value of a diverse workforce, where formal certifications are not the sole measure of qualification. Many employees without traditional degrees play crucial roles in patient care. Gonzales' presentation emphasized the significance of soft skills, including empathy, active listening, non-verbal communication, and the need for strong written communication, precise grammar, and professional conduct in customer service. Furthermore, she discussed essential skills such as basic math, spreadsheet proficiency, leadership, project management, time management, and the importance of professional development workshops.

Gonzales encouraged students and job seekers to incorporate personal stories, including experiences like homelessness or mental health crises, into their cover letters, as employers appreciate the enriching perspective they bring. She also discussed WellSpace Institute's [Medical Assistant Training Program](#). This is a six-month program that pays its participants during cognitive and behavioral health training, and offers a comprehensive mental and behavioral health career overview.

Gonzales mentioned [Bill SB-525](#), which proposes changes to the minimum wage for healthcare workers in California, with different wage schedules depending on the types of employers. The proposed minimum wage rates range from \$18 to \$25 per hour, with specific timelines for implementation and adjustments.

Labor Market Information and Job Posting Insights

After the welcome, Ebony Benzing, Interim Director of the North (Greater Sacramento) Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research, hosted by Los Rios Community College District, provided labor market data that gave an overview of the mental and behavioral health fields. The data presented was a follow-up from the December 2020 COE report on [Mental and Behavioral Health Occupations](#) and covered the period from 2022 to 2027.

The report categorized 19 mental and behavioral health occupations into five key areas: Entry-Level and Paraprofessionals, Psychiatric Technicians, Clinical Counselors and Psychologists, Social Workers, and Psychiatrists. The first two categories, Entry-Level and Paraprofessional Psychiatric Technicians, were indicated by Benzing as ideal targets for community college career education programs, and they cover Social and Human Services Assistance, Social and Community Managers, Health Education Specialists, Community Health Workers, and Community and Social Services Specialists), as well as Psychiatric Technicians and Aids (Figure 1.1)

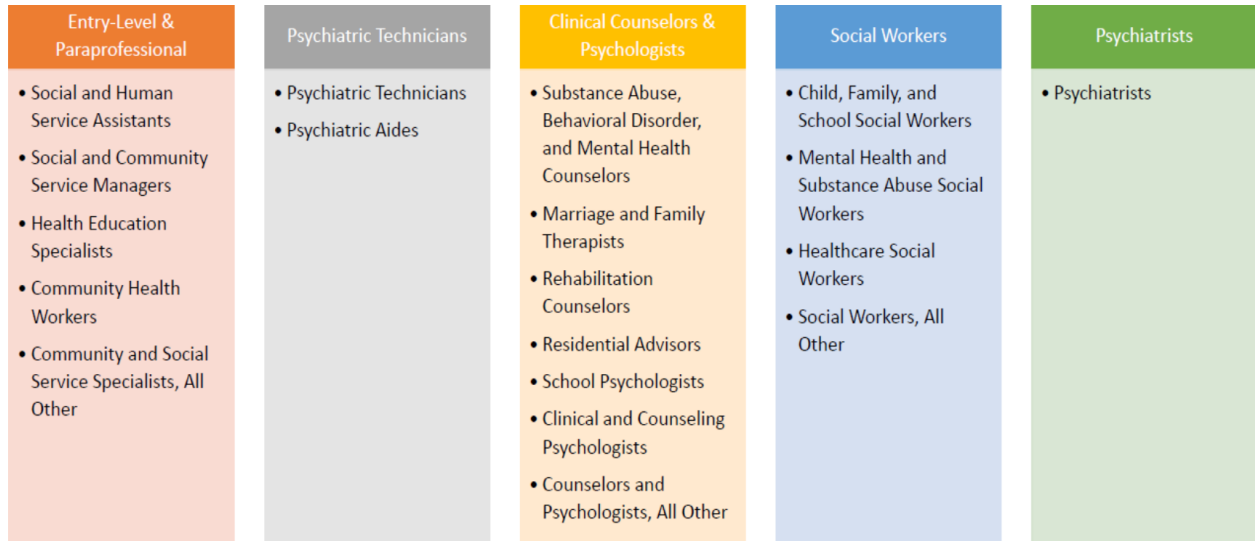


Figure 1.1 Mental and Behavioral Health Job Occupations

The data broke down labor demand, revealing that in 2022, 90% of jobs in the Greater Sacramento subregion in mental and behavioral health occupations were concentrated within ten specific job categories. These categories include roles in State Government (excluding Education and Hospitals), Individual and Family Services, Offices of Other Health Practitioners, Local Government (excluding Education and Hospitals), Outpatient Care Centers, local Education and Hospitals, and State Education and Hospitals (Figure 1.2).

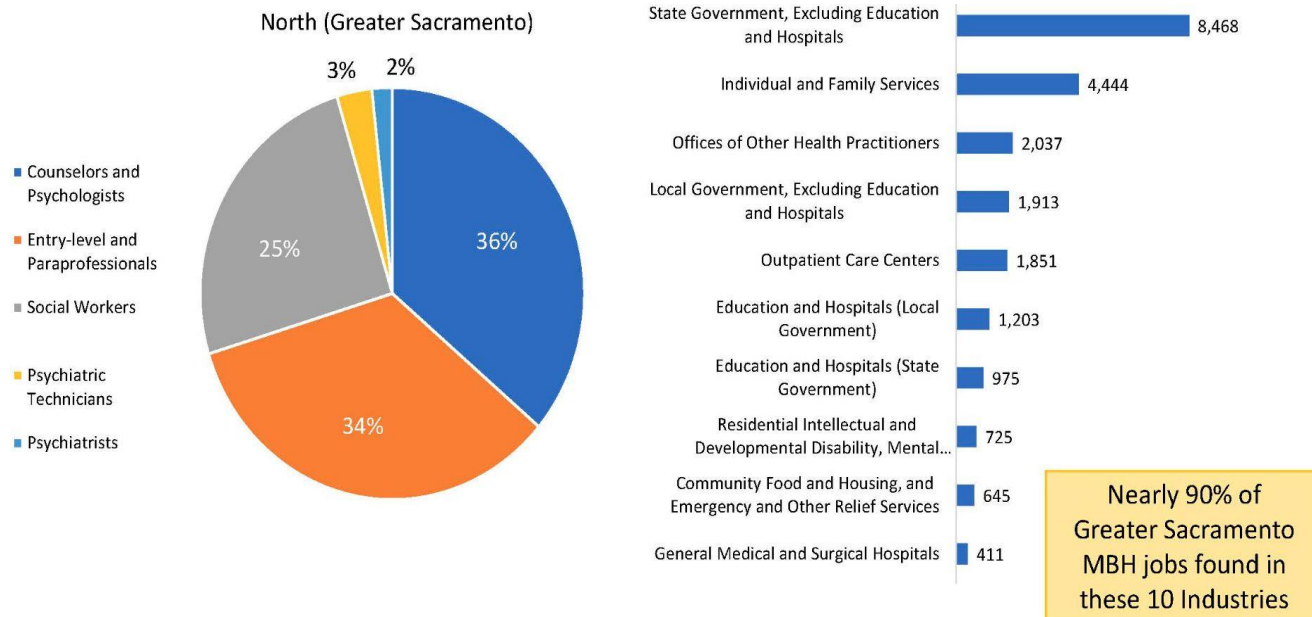


Figure 1.2 Mental and Behavioral Health Workforce and Industry

In 2022, the Greater Sacramento region had over 25,000 mental and behavioral health jobs, with projections indicating a 14% growth rate by 2027. According to the data presented, Entry-level and Paraprofessional roles are poised for a 15% increase, translating to 1,296 jobs. In comparison, Psychiatric Technicians are projected to see a 24% growth rate, accounting for 116 additional jobs (Figure 1.3). In Figure 1.4, the median wage for entry-level positions in the mental and behavioral health field in this area exceeds the hourly salary of the average working adult. This information was sourced from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, as reported by Benzing.

MBH Occupational Category	2022 Jobs	Projected % Change, 2022-2027	5-Yr Avg. Annual Openings
Counselors and Psychologists	9,333	13%	1,090
Entry-level and Paraprofessionals	8,786	15%	1,296
Social Workers	6,467	14%	815
Psychiatric Technicians	761	24%	116
Psychiatrists	442	10%	21
Totals	25,788	14%	3,339

Figure 1.3 Mental and Behavioral Health Current Employment and Projections for Greater Sacramento

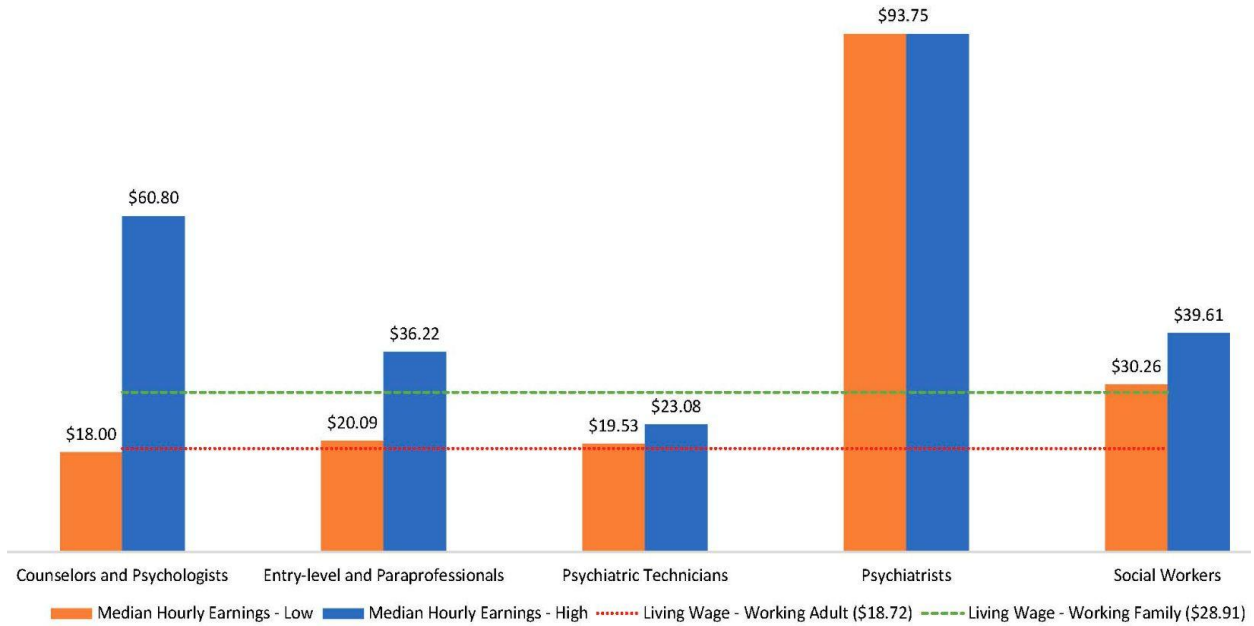


Figure 1.4 Mental and Behavioral Health Median Wage Ranges

The data also revealed that job postings in the Greater Sacramento subregion have increased by 22% in the last 12 months (spanning September 2022 to August 2023). More than 6,954 job postings emerged during this period, indicating robust demand in the mental and behavioral health sector (Figure 1.5).

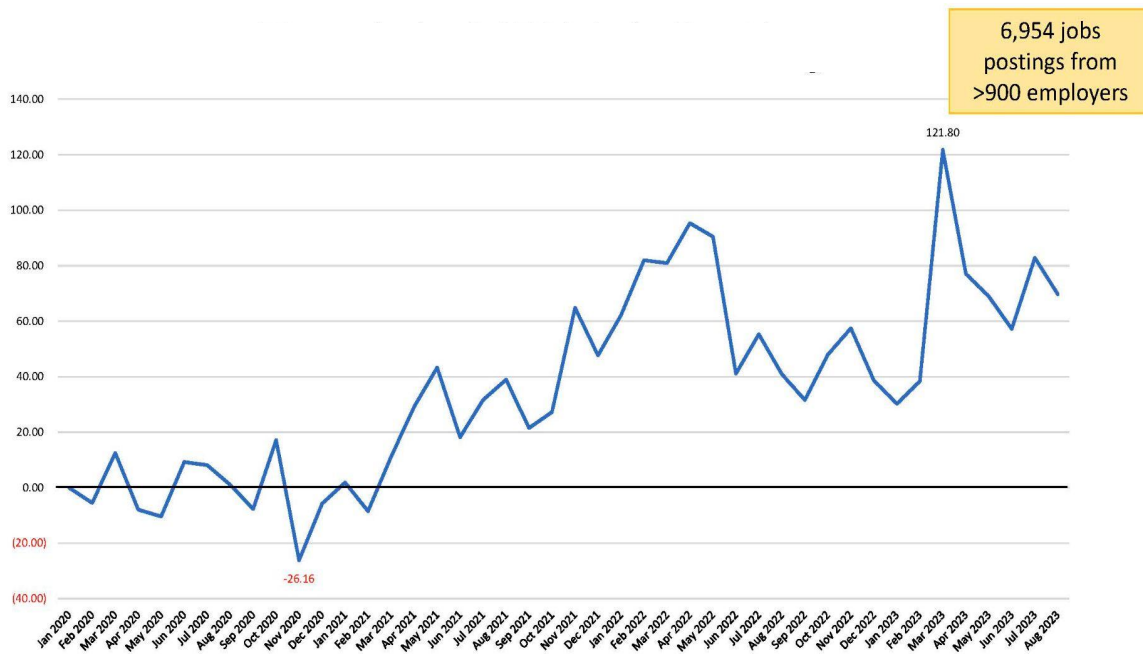


Figure 1.5 Mental and Behavioral Health Trends in Job Postings over three years

Nearly 90% of these job postings are for three predominant occupational groups: Counselors and Psychologists, Entry Level and Paraprofessionals (emphasized as prime targets for Community College career education programs), and Social Workers (Figure 1.6).

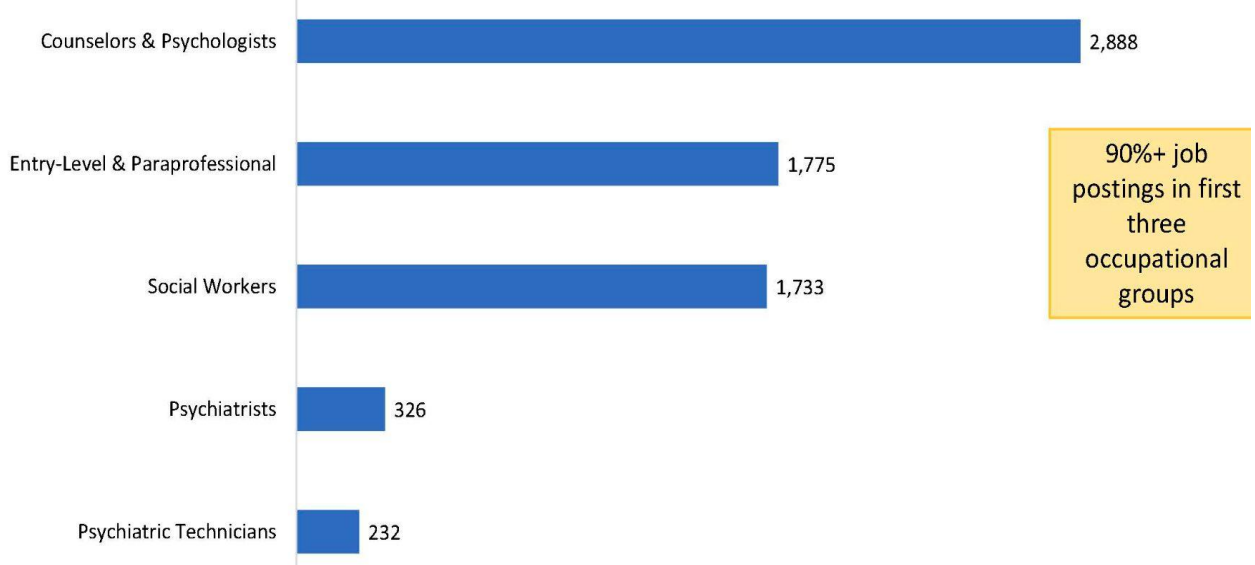


Figure 1.6 Mental and Behavioral Health Job Posting by Occupation

Some noteworthy employers in this sector include healthcare giants like Kaiser Permanente, UC Davis, and a prison healthcare contractor, Wellpath (Figure 1.7).

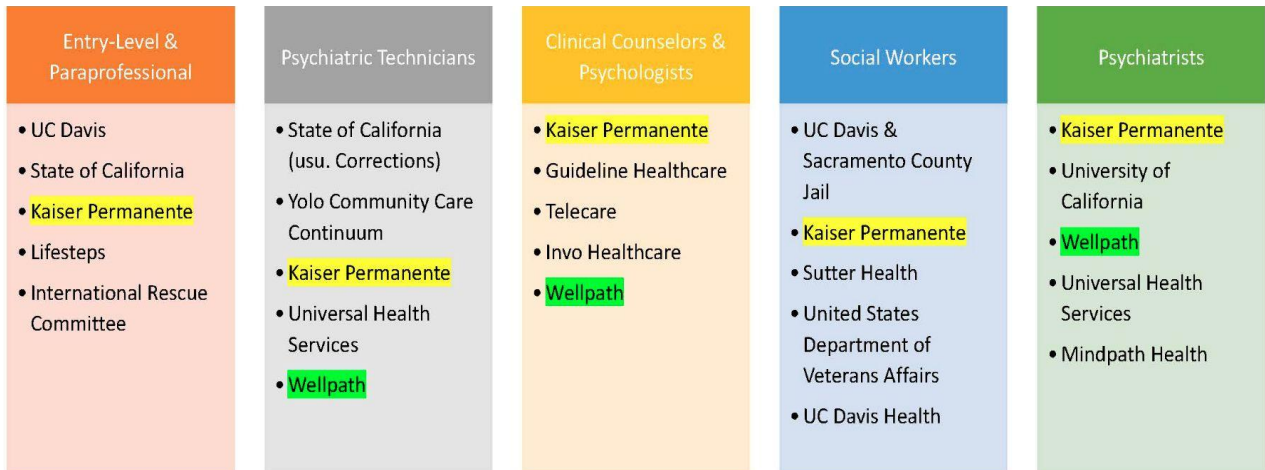


Figure 1.7 Mental and Behavioral Health Top Employers

The data in Figure 1.8 emphasizes the importance of specialized skills and certifications in mental and behavioral health jobs, particularly in Greater Sacramento. Nursing, social work, psychology, and mental health training are highly valued competencies that are consistently in demand, reflecting the changing needs of the local workforce. Employers actively seek specific credentials, including Registered Nurses (RNs), Nurse Practitioners (NPs), Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS), Critical Care Registered Nurses (CCRN), Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), Registered Behavior Technicians, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, and Licensed Clinical Social Workers. These certifications highlight the specialized nature of mental and behavioral health occupations and the expertise required to excel in these roles.



Figure 1.8 Mental and Behavioral Health Specialized Skills

Despite the high demand for skilled professionals and numerous job postings, there is a persistent challenge related to workforce supply. The disparity between available job postings and workers with the required certifications and degrees is noteworthy. Figure 1.9 shows that local community colleges awarded 160 certificates (excluding healthcare), while 4-year institutions granted 1,163 Bachelor's and 129 Master's degrees. This incongruity between the robust demand for mental and behavioral health professionals, as shown in Figure 1.5 with 6,954 job listings, and the limited number of students receiving degrees, only 1,452, underscores the urgent need for strategic interventions to bridge this gap.

Community College Programs	3-Yr Average CC Awards	4-Yr Institution Programs	2-Yr Avg. Bachelor Degree	2-Yr Avg. Master's and Beyond
Alcohol and Controlled Substances	50			
Community Health Care Worker	13			
Gerontology	14			
Human Services	71			
Psychiatric Technician	12			
CE Subtotals	160			
Behavioral Science	21	Human Development	330	6
Biology, General	401	Gerontology	61	N/A
Psychology, General	951	Psychology, General	545	34
Sociology	275	Social Work	227	89
GE Subtotals	1,648	Grand Total	1,163	129
Certified Nurse Assistant	17	<p>Average Annual Completions:</p> <p>Community College Awards (excl. health): 160 Bachelor Degree: 1,163 Master+: 129</p> <p>>>>UNDERSUPPLY<<<</p>		
Home Health Aide	--			
Licensed Vocational Nursing	48			
Registered Nursing	220			
Healthcare Subtotals	285			
Grand Total	2,093			

Figure 1.9 Mental and Behavioral Health-Related Program Completion Over Three Years

Panel Discussion

In a panel discussion, the following industry experts informed attendees about the current and changing landscape of the mental and behavioral health industries:

- Jessie Armenta, Clinical Director, La Familia Counseling Center
- Jeneba Lahai, Executive Director at Yolo County Children's Alliance
- Shanine Coats, Director, Strategic Initiatives Sacramento County Office of Education
- Christie Gonzales, Chief Program Officer, WellSpace Health
- Emilio Licea III, PsyD, Behavioral Health Manager I, Consortium Director North Valley Training Program, Training Director at Kaiser

Panelists shared features of their agencies, detailing the size of their organizations in terms of staffing, clients served, and upcoming staffing needs. The panel represented a variety of mental health employers, from county school districts to community-certified behavioral health clinics to a large, private healthcare consortium. Each agency expressed the need for clinical psychologists or specialists in social work, but additionally emphasized a labor demand all along the pipeline continuum that necessitated each agency to develop internal training and workforce development programs. During the panel discussion, the employers built on each

other's suggestions by stressing adjacent skills in demand that included lived experience, language, and cultural competency.

Cultural Competency and Language Skills

In mental and behavioral health care, it's essential to be culturally competent and have language translation services available to meet the diverse needs of clients from various circumstances and backgrounds.

Lahai stressed the importance of culturally relevant clinicians communicating effectively with clients from different communities. This requires more than superficial cultural awareness but a deep understanding of each client's unique challenges and experiences. Armenta highlighted their commitment to internally nurturing talent, including cultivating a diverse and culturally competent workforce.

The panel also recognized translation services as crucial in providing adequate mental and behavioral health care. Gonzales highlighted the critical role of translators in areas like Arden and Arcade, which have a diverse population, including the Afghan community. Effective communication is essential to ensure clients from different linguistic backgrounds receive the support and treatment they need.

Lived Experience

The panel discussion emphasized the importance of personal experience within specific communities in providing effective care. This firsthand knowledge allows individuals to better connect with clients facing similar challenges, fostering trust and rapport, which are fundamental in therapeutic relationships. The panelists stressed the significance of lived experience in the mental and behavioral health field, especially when considering diverse applicants. They recognized that individuals who have personally faced mental health challenges or have had experiences related to the communities they serve bring a level of empathy, understanding, and cultural competence that formal education alone cannot provide.

Lahai, who prioritizes cultural competence and lived experience over formal degrees when recruiting staff for work with vulnerable populations, stressed the value of lived experience within specific communities. This approach ensures that staff can relate to the unique challenges and backgrounds of the people they serve, particularly individuals experiencing homelessness.

Coats emphasized the difficulty in finding culturally relevant clinicians and highlighted the importance of education and mentorship in working with children. She recognized the significance of peer mentors who can draw from their experiences to connect with and support young, disenfranchised individuals.

Skill Development

During the panel session, a central discussion revolved around the critical proficiencies and skills required of the individual going into the mental and behavioral health sector. One panelist, Licea, said there is need for proficiency in telehealth services, but emphasized the need for clinicians skilled in risk assessments, particularly for complex situations like child abuse, suicidal ideation, and homicidal ideation, to ensure client safety.

Lahai highlighted the need for equity in paraprofessional roles. They emphasized the value of individuals with lived experiences within specific communities and cultural competence in connecting with and providing personalized care to underserved populations. Coats spoke about the significance of relationship-building and practical communication skills, particularly in multidisciplinary and community-based settings. Effective collaboration and communication are vital in enhancing client outcomes in these contexts.

The panelists also discussed practical challenges within the profession, including burnout and administrative demands. They emphasized the importance of preparing paraprofessionals for paperwork, training requirements, and productivity expectations, underscoring the need for organizational skills and effective management of mental and behavioral health services administrative aspects. They also stressed the importance of time management, cultural competency, and understanding professional boundaries to manage caseloads efficiently, ensure clients receive appropriate care and prevent professional burnout.

Expanding Jobs

Shanine Coats explained that SCOE plans to fill 300 new mental and behavioral healthcare positions. She discussed a partnership with the Department of Health Services to turn schools into wellness centers and create a career pipeline from high school to licensure. Coats emphasized the importance of education and training in trauma-informed care for individuals seeking careers in health professions.

The panelists detailed growing demand in mental and behavioral health careers beyond conventional roles like psychiatrists. The panelists described a need for psychiatric technicians, social workers, and paraprofessionals. They also recognized the need for professionals beyond mental health specialists to address the unique healthcare needs of a diverse population, such as nurses, EMTs, paramedics, and translators.

The employer panelists described volunteer and internship opportunities for individuals in high school and beyond to encourage early engagement in cultivating talent from the local community.

Conclusion and Program Highlights

The advisory concluded with An Tã Program Specialist III/Administrator, Teaching & Learning Yolo County Office of Education, discussing their Career Education programs, designed to get community members into occupations quickly. These include free training programs on Cognitive-Behavioral Interventions Core Youth, Community Health Worker Certificate Program, Social Work and Human Service Skills and Tools Certificate Program, COgnitive-Behavioral Interventions-Interpersonal Violence, Mental Health First Aid, and Community Health Worker Certificate Program.

Lauren Mechals and Rebecca Stevens from Sacramento Employment Training Agency (SETA) introduced training programs for adults ages 18-24 with lived experience to prepare them for entry-level positions in the Mental Health Field. SETA is partnering with CalVoices and NAMI California for the 80 hour training that includes a paid work experience opportunity. They are actively recruiting students and agencies/employers to host the work-based learning portion of the program.

Dr. Emilio Licea III shared information on the Kaiser Permanente Mental Health Training Programs, which feature a developmental training model that builds upon baseline skills and competency benchmarks acquired during graduate, college, and high school education. To find out more or to apply for the college or the high school 7-week paid-internship program, visit [KP Launch Diversifying the Future of Healthcare Website](#).

In conclusion of the speaking portion, the attendees were given the contact information of the Director of Employment Partnerships in Health and Public Safety, Karen Hubbard, and Hilary Tellesen, Project Leader at Valley Vision. Contact information is listed below for each:

- Karen Hubbard, Director of Employment Partnerships in Health and Public Safety, HubbarKE@arc.losrios.edu
- Hilary Tellesen, Workforce Project Manager, Valley Vision, hilary.tellesen@valleyvision.org