

PARTNERS

The Illinois Behavioral Health Workforce Center is a joint initiative of the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, University of Illinois Chicago, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Illinois Department of Human Services, the Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. The model is comprised of academic institutions that serve communities across the state.

The BHWC will coordinate with key state agencies involved in behavioral health, workforce development, and higher education to tap into diverse resources from health care, workforce, and economic development programs in Illinois government. These agencies will, at a minimum, include the state agencies, mental health providers, educational institutions (colleges, universities, K-12), workforce investment boards and other community-based organizations.



IllinoisBHWC.org



The Behavioral Health Workforce Center was established to increase Illinois' capacity to recruit, educate and retain behavioral health professionals, from peer support specialists to psychiatrists.



Illinois is facing a critical shortage in its behavioral health workforce: the state's current number of behavioral health professionals is only able to provide a fourth of the services required to meet the population's behavioral health needs. From 2017 to 2019, the shortage of providers in Illinois increased 215%, creating much greater deficits compared to neighboring states. In addition to staff shortages, there is a need for training in evidence-based practices to support provision of high-quality services. In response to these critical needs, in 2022 the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and the Department of Human Services (DHS) created the Illinois Behavior Health Workforce Education Center (the Center) to increase the number of behavioral health professionals across the state and meet the training needs of behavioral health providers.

Visit IllinoisBHC.org to learn more.

CENTER GOAL

The primary goal of the statewide Behavioral Health Workforce Center is to strengthen the behavioral healthcare system in Illinois through initiatives targeting the following:

- 1** Policy recommendations that address structural and policy barriers to recruitment, training, and retention.
- 2** Data collection on behavioral health workforce needs.
- 3** Diversity and equity initiatives to increase the number and diversity of behavioral health workers across the state.

Capacity building for primary care physicians, physician assistants, pharmacists, and nurses to meet behavioral health and substance abuse use needs.

The Center is structured as a multi-site model. Southern Illinois University School of Medicine (SIU SOM) serves as the administering hub and provides primary coordination of the consortium and support for building the behavioral health pipeline to increase entry into behavioral health. The University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) serves as a secondary hub to provide support for specific data collection and training initiatives. Additional institutions of higher education, including public and independent universities and community colleges in 10 regions, will be invited to participate as a consortium of educational partners. SIUSOM, UIC, and all consortium members will coordinate programs and oversee initiatives to increase the behavioral healthcare workforce and its capacity to provide high-quality behavioral health services across the state.

BHWC LEADERSHIP

KARI WOLF, MD

Chair of the Department of Psychiatry and CEO of the Behavioral Health Workforce Center

SONYA LEATHERS, PHD

Professor Leathers at Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) will lead the secondary hub

