Oklahoma has significant current and projected shortages of behavioral health professionals, especially among psychiatric providers and especially in rural areas. These shortages are being worsened by increased demand resulting from the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and will be intensified by the upcoming expansion of Medicaid. Over the last 10 years, several stakeholders have worked extensively to identify and develop initiatives to address behavioral health workforce shortages. Oklahoma has put some key building blocks in place, but it has not followed through on these initiatives.

### Psychiatrist Supply

Communities need 30.3 psychiatric prescribers per 100,000 residents. Oklahoma has 10.3 psychiatrists per 100,000 residents statewide. Most rural counties do not have any psychiatrists.

Many patients with mild and moderate behavioral health conditions receive medication management through a primary care physician; however, only half of the diagnosable mental health and substance abuse conditions are detected in primary care, and only half of those whose condition is detected receive any form of treatment.

### Psychotherapy Supply

With the exception of licensed professional counselors, Oklahoma has shortages across most types of psychosocial behavioral health providers who provide the bulk of psychotherapy, which, when evidenced-based, is highly effective in treating behavioral health disorders.

### Compensation

In the seven-state region of Oklahoma and its six surrounding states, Oklahoma ranks last, after adjusting for cost of living, in compensation for social workers and psychologists, third for alcohol and drug counselors and fourth for psychiatrists.
### Increasing Supply

#### Integrated Care

Use our limited psychiatry workforce more effectively and increase the detection and treatment of mild to moderate behavioral health conditions in primary care by collaborating with primary care providers to expand integrated care and by taking to scale existing efforts, such as SBIRT, which is already being implemented in some Oklahoma clinics.

#### Telehealth

Maximize telehealth to meet the increased demand for services by making permanent some of the COVID-19-inspired changes that allow flexibility of use.

#### More PMHNPs

Increase the number of PMHNPs in the state.

#### Psychiatry Residencies

Increase the number of psychiatry residencies in the state, particularly with training experiences in community psychiatry and rural areas, and expand fellowship opportunities in child and adolescent psychiatry and addiction medicine.

### Improving Compensation

#### Loan Repayment

Identify public and private resources for the Mental Health Loan Repayment Revolving Fund, created by Senate Bill 773 in 2019, so that the program can be implemented. Explore the possibility of expanding the Physician Manpower Training Commission’s mission to address shortages in psychiatry.

#### Policies and Parity Laws

Keep wages and benefits for behavioral health providers in Oklahoma competitive. Compare provider payment policies and other financial incentives with surrounding states. Ensure full implementation of Oklahoma’s parity laws to provide adequate rates of pay.

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