



Behavioral Health Higher Education Program (BHHEP)

Specifications Guide

April 2024

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Purpose

- To increase the Behavioral Health (BH) HealthChoices (HC) provider staff member staffing pool with high quality candidates.
- Member access to high quality Behavioral Health (BH) HealthChoices (HC) services has been primarily impacted by a decline in BH provider staffing.
- Recent shifts in the job market have outpaced BH HC providers in keeping staff.
- A significant barrier for providers is not being able to fund retention and recruitment programs at an amount and frequency as corporations and other larger businesses.
- BH HC staff have often left the field for retail, industry, and other lines of businesses.
- Develop and demonstrate the potential effectiveness of a well-organized recruitment program.
- Collaborate and communicate the outcomes of the program for potential broader approaches.

Program Highlights

- BHARP and the 15 County/Joiners developed the tuition reimbursement program for the first time in 2022.
- Program will resemble the Child Welfare Education for Baccalaureates (CWEB) program in 2022.
- The initial goals for 2022 are to keep the project manageable and optimize effectiveness.
- The BHHEP in 2022 will operate as a pilot program that may require additional refinement from experiences during the year.
- Estimated cost of \$20,000 per individual in the program with 45 available slots for students.
- Individuals will participate in an internship at the provider agency prior to graduation.
- Individuals will be eligible to have their senior year of college reimbursed.
- Individuals would only be able to reimburse the senior year up to the in-state tuition amount to not exceed \$20,000.

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Roles and Responsibilities

- 1) Management of the program will be a collaboration between BHARP and the 15 Signatory County Agencies.
- 2) BHARP Responsibilities
 - a) BHARP will allocate funding on behalf of the County/Joiners for up to three positions per each of the 15 Signatory County Agencies.
 - b) BHARP will develop introductory communication and guide to County/Joiners.
 - i) This will include a summary page that highlights the roles and responsibilities of the County/Joiner, who to contact with questions, and provider requirements.
 - ii) Request for the County/Joiner to opt in or opt out of the BHHEP.
 - iii) Include a statement that this program is new and feedback/input from County/Joiners is essential for its success.
 - iv) Include a statement regarding civil service rules.
 - v) Invitation to an upcoming webinar with County/Joiners to discuss BHHEP and answer questions.
 - c) BHARP will receive, validate, collect, and archive all required paperwork.
 - i) This includes the documentation required for acceptance into the program and the documentation to be completed when the individual is accepted.
 - d) BHARP will develop a centralized contact list of participating colleges/universities and providers.

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- i) BHARP will contact the CWEB/CWEL program staff, OCYF, and OMHSAS regarding insights on contacts within colleges/universities for tuition reimbursement programs.
 - ii) BHARP will develop a contact list to include entities that participate in the program.
 - iii) BHARP will disseminate the contact list to County/Joiners.
- e) BHARP will gather information necessary to develop an annual report on the program.
- i) Number of individuals in the program.
 - ii) Number of individuals that completed the program.
 - iii) Number of individuals that did not complete the program.
 - iv) Length of employment at a BH HC provider agency.
- f) BHARP will develop a Student Handbook to assist individuals in understanding the requirements of the program.
- i) Includes development of the standardized progress reporting and monitoring.
- g) BHARP will develop the application process and documentation.
- h) BHARP will receive all application packets
- i) BHARP will review application packets to ensure the information contains are required documentation.
 - ii) BHARP will disseminate the complete application packets to County/Joiners.

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- i) BHARP has permission from the Department to take the funding from 2022, place the funding into Risk and Contingency (R&C) until 2023 when it can be taken out of the R&C fund to make payments in 2023.
- j) BHARP will develop a mid-point and end point progress report of students per year.
 - i) The first report will be while the individual is participating in the internship.
 - (1) Includes input from the individual, provider, and the school advisor.
 - ii) The second report will occur in the first year of the commitment.
 - (1) Includes input from the individual and the provider.
 - k) BHARP will make payments directly to the college/university on behalf of the County/Joinder.
 - i) BHARP will work with the college/university to obtain the invoice for the student's final year.
 - l) BHARP will develop contracts directly between BHARP and the students.
 - m) BHARP will develop a memorandum of understanding between BHARP and the providers that participate in the program.
- 3) County/Joinder Responsibilities
 - a) The County/Joinder must decide on whether they intend to opt into the program and use the three available positions or choose to opt out not use the three positions.
 - i) County/Joinders that opt out of the program will have their positions reallocated to other County/Joinders.
 - ii) The BHHEP Advisory Council will determine who receives the positions.

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- b) A County/Joinder will determine the provider agency(ies) that will be participate with the three positions.
 - i) County/Joinders may opt to have the BHHEP Advisory Council weigh in on who the providers are that would receive the positions within their contract.
 - ii) Providers must be selected that can meet provider responsibility requirements.
 - iii) County/Joinder will be the main point of contact for providers.
- c) The County/Joinder may use their connections/relationships with college/universities or place the ownership of the relationship on the provider to use their relationships with a college/university.
 - i) BHARP will provide resources on potential college/university contacts or outreach.
 - ii) BHARP and the BHHEP Advisory Council may assist.
- d) County/Joinders will need to ensure that their civil service rules (if applicable) are adequately addressed.
- e) County/Joinder will either conduct the interviews or work with their selected providers to conduct the interviews.
 - i) County/Joinder management of the interview process is necessary to ensure the selection process is objective and fair.
- f) Any providers opting to remove individuals from the program for poor performance or other issues, must obtain approval from the County/Joinder.
- g) The County/Joinder will be responsible for primary oversight of the program specific to their positions.

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- i) Each County/Joinder will designate a main point of contact for communication with the student.
 - ii) The County/Joinder designate contact will utilize the BHHEP Advisory Council as needed.
- 4) BHHEP Advisory Council
- a) Will be formed that includes 5 members of the current Provider Workforce and Staffing Workgroup to assist in making decisions regarding the BHHEP.
 - b) BHARP will participate as a facilitator of the council.
 - c) The BHHEP Advisory Council membership can be adjusted from any BHARP Board of Directors (BOD) meeting.
 - d) The BHHEP Advisory Council will make determinations on positions of County/Joinders that have opted out.
 - i) The BHHEP Advisory Council will present the shift of positions from the giving agency to the receiving agency at the BHARP BOD Informational Session to ensure the BHARP BOD stays informed.
 - ii) The BHHEP Advisory Council will make their determinations based on the need of the receiving County/Joinder.
 - e) If a provider and/or the individual want to move their employment from one service location to another that may be outside of the BHARP region, this movement must be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis by the BHHEP Advisory Council.
 - f) Provide input, feedback, and support to County/Joinders in assisting them in conducting their responsibilities as required.

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5) Provider Responsibilities

- a) Providers may include a County/Joinder delivered service.
- b) Must be able manage internships successfully with an internship plan and staff to support the intern's success.
- c) Must be a BHARP BH HC provider.
- d) Must be able to be able to honor the 2-year commitment of the individual after the internship.
 - i) A provider may opt out of the program if after the internship or during the internship the individual is not a good fit for the agency.
 - ii) Providers opting to remove individuals from the program must obtain the approval from the County/Joinder.
- e) A single provider that is in more than one BHARP Signatory County Agency may benefit from the BHHEP from more than one BHARP Signatory County Agency.
- f) A provider may be requested to participate in the interview process by the County/Joinder.
- g) If a provider and/or the individual want to move their employment from one service location to another that may be outside of the BHARP region, this movement must be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis by the BHHEP Advisory Council.

6) College/University Responsibilities

- a) Must be physically located in Pennsylvania.
 - i) County/Joinders may select a college/university that is outside of Pennsylvania on a case-by-case basis.

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- b) Does not have to be a college/university that is a member of the Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education.
- c) College/university must have an academic advisor to support the individual and to provide needed updates from the school.
- d) College/university must have a system in place to manage internships.
- e) College/university must be accredited.
- f) The senior year tuition amount is capped at \$20,000, therefore college/universities with annual tuition costs exceeding \$20,000 per year per person will only allow the individual to be reimbursed up to \$20,000 for their senior year of classes.

7) Student Responsibilities

- a) Must be at least a Junior in a college or university at the time application.
- b) BSW, Psychology, and other BH related majors are preferred, though not required.
- c) No required coursework for the position.
- d) Must be a PA resident at the time of application.
 - i) Please contact the BHHEP Advisory Council if situations arise where the applicant is not a PA resident.
- e) Must maintain a GPA of 3.0.
- f) Internship must occur during or directly prior to the student's senior year.
 - i) Internship may occur Summer 2023, Fall 2023, Spring 2024, and/or Summer 2024.

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- ii) Internships must be at least 400 hours, though a student may have less hours based on internship requirements of their educational discipline.
- iii) Could be at the end of the junior year prior to the start of the senior year.
- iv) Completing the internship is the responsibility of the student.
- g) Individuals may apply for the BHHEP by submitting the following documents:
 - i) Resume
 - ii) School Acceptance Letter
 - (1) Letter from the college/university advisor on the student being a good fit for the program.
 - iii) Personal Statement
 - (1) Letter from the individual on why they believe they are good fit for the program.
 - iv) Copy of the current driver's license
 - (1) Verification of PA residency
 - v) College/university transcripts

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- h) Once the student is selected and accepted, the individual must submit the following documents after selecting the candidates:
- i) Completed contract
 - ii) FERPA
 - iii) Clearances
 - iv) W4

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