



# **Behavioral Health Higher Education Program (BHHEP)**

**Student Handbook**

**April 2024**



## **Welcome**

Welcome to the Behavioral Health Higher Education Program (BHHEP) developed by the Behavioral Health Alliance of Rural Pennsylvania (BHARP). BHARP was established in the fall of 2006 and is comprised of County MH/ID Administrators and Human Service Directors, along with Drug and Alcohol Single County Authorities from 24 counties in north central Pennsylvania. BHARP is a Pennsylvania Non-Profit Corporation who is the primary contractor for the North Central Behavioral HealthChoices Contract.

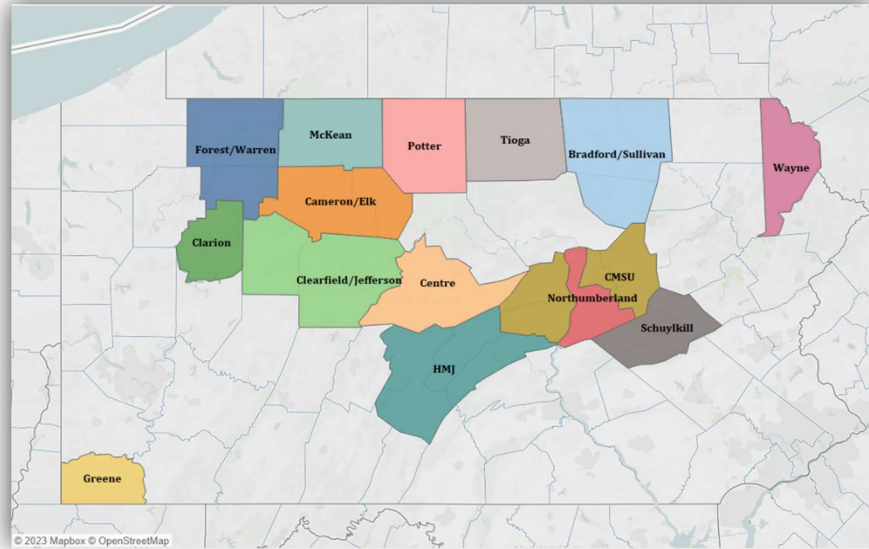
This handbook will explain specifics of the program to ensure that the student may be successful during their time with the program. Our goal is to support the student through the program and can embark on a successful career in Behavioral Health services. Please feel free to use the information in this handbook to reach out for assistance or support at any time.

## **Who is BHARP?**

Medicaid is administered by the states, in accordance with federal regulations. In Pennsylvania the state contracts with counties or joiners of more than one county to have the responsibility of the provision of the Behavioral Health HealthChoices (BH HC) program.

BHARP is a primary contractor that represents 24 of the 67 Pennsylvania Counties. The counties are in rural settings and are comprised of the following:

- Bradford/Sullivan
- Cameron/Elk
- Centre
- Clarion
- Clearfield/Jefferson
- Columbia/Montour/Snyder/Union (CMSU)
- Forest/Warren
- Greene
- Huntingdon/Mifflin/Juniata (HMJ)
- McKean
- Northumberland
- Potter
- Schuylkill
- Tioga
- Wayne



Medicaid provides healthcare coverage to over 250,000 individuals in the BHARP twenty-four county region or almost 25% of the population within the counties. Further information regarding BHARP can be accessed at our website at <https://bharp.org/>.

### **Why are we here?**

Simply put, BHARP needs to increase the availability of behavioral health services to our members and the biggest barrier is providers being able to hire qualified professionals. The BHHEP is designed to demonstrate that a tuition reimbursement program for Baccalaureates would be a successful approach in overcoming the workforce barrier.

Members needing access to services have been impacted by ongoing issues with provider workforce and staffing. Providers have been unable to hire qualified candidates for Behavioral Health positions and therefore cannot increase availability of services to members to reduce the length of time for routine appointments to be delivered within 7 days of requesting the service.

Provider workforce and staffing challenges are well documented and prevalent prior to the public health emergency, though the public health emergency significantly exasperated the situation. In June 2020, the Joint State Government Commission published a staff study on the Mental Health Care Workforce Challenges and Solutions ([http://jsg.legis.state.pa.us/resources/documents/ftp/publications/2020-06-04%20HR193 Mental%20Health%20Workforce.pdf](http://jsg.legis.state.pa.us/resources/documents/ftp/publications/2020-06-04%20HR193%20Mental%20Health%20Workforce.pdf)). This document highlighted the significant need in developing workforce resources and highlighted the disparity in the number of mental health care providers in rural counties as compared to urban and



suburban counties. This staff study was commenced prior to the public health emergency on May 14, 2019, under House Resolution No. 193.

In January 2022, The Center for Rural Pennsylvania published research titled Access to Mental Health Services in Rural Pennsylvania

(<https://www.rural.pa.gov/download.cfm?file=Resources/PDFs/research-report/Mental%20Health%20Access%20Final%20Report%20January%202022.pdf>),

which highlighted its core key finding from the study among both providers and insurers that a major barrier to delivered mental health services in the area, is a shortage of professionals and finding clinicians with the appropriate level of credentialing. This report indicated as one of its 10 strategies and policy considerations to “attract qualified mental health professionals to rural areas and facilitate staff credentialing and education”.

### **How does this relate to you?**

We are very excited to have you engaged in the program. Your success in the program is vital to our growth as a system and meeting the increasing needs in mental health and/or substance use disorder services. Developing more college level professionals to enter the field and have a successful career in Behavioral Health services is essential to our success.

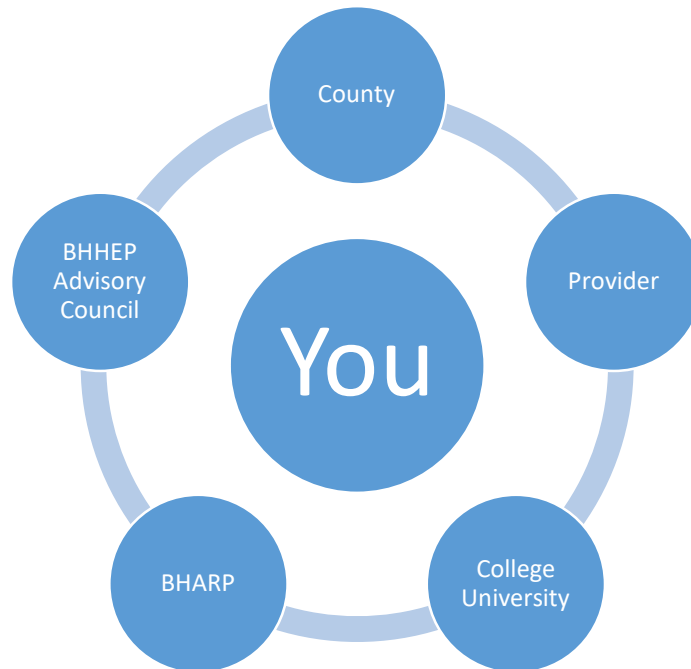
### **What is required of me?**

The basic requirements to participate in the program and continue participating in the program are as follows:

- Complete the required application paperwork and all other needed paperwork.
- Maintain good standing with the college/university and maintain a 3.0 GPA.
- Maintain contact with the provider, the county, and the BHHEP staff.
- Complete the internship with the provider during your senior year of studies.
- Complete all necessary application materials with the provider.
- Graduate with an undergraduate degree.
- Complete two full years of employment with the behavioral health provider.



## What are the roles of the various entities?



The **County** are the primary contact and oversight of your program. The counties selected the provider(s) that will participate in the program. The counties either selected or delegated selection of the college/universities to participate in the program. The counties also may have been involved in the selection of students to participate in the program.

The **Provider** is the entity in which the student will complete an internship within their senior year and complete two years of employment with the same provider. The internship experience requirement is designed to ensure that students and providers are a quality match that would lead to success of the individual within the provider.

The **College/University** is the entity that ultimately was connected to by the County and the Provider to find qualified students who may take advantage of the BHHEP.

The **BHHEP Advisory Council** is a panel of five counties that provide general decision making and overall communication regarding the BHHEP.

**BHARP** fulfills an administrative role in the development of necessary documents, ensuring payments are made to college universities for the senior year, and facilitates the BHHEP Advisory Council meetings.



## Process Prior to Acceptance in BHHEP

Discuss with advisor regarding the BHHEP

Determine with your advisor if BHHEP is the right fit for you

Complete and submit the application paperwork

Provide all required documents for the application

Participate in the Student Application screening process with BHHEP

## How to Apply?

Application to BHHEP requires the following items:

- Access the application at [www.bharp.org](http://www.bharp.org) and submit the application with the following documents:
  - A current resume
  - A letter of recommendation from the college/university faculty member to participate in BHHEP
  - A personal statement from the applicant on why they are a good fit for the program
  - A copy of transcripts (unofficial copy is acceptable)
  - A copy of your driver's license
- Submit all required materials securely to [theruraldifference@bharp.org](mailto:theruraldifference@bharp.org).

Please note that there may be a period of time received until your application is processed. The selection of students is based upon criteria which include the interest in a behavioral



health career field, personal statement content, grade point average, availability of positions, faculty/advisor recommendations, and interviews. Please ensure you provide current, valid e-mail addresses for communication with the BHHEP as e-mail will be a primary method of communication.

If you submit an application but are not selected to proceed to a selection interview or not selected after a selection interview, you will be notified by e-mail.

### **Process After to Acceptance in BHHEP**

Receive acceptance to BHHEP

Send back contract, clearances, and other required paperwork

Successfully complete an internship at a Behavioral Health provider in your senior year

Graduate from school

Have immediate placement at a Behavioral Health provider

Once you have received your acceptance into BHHEP, please conduct the following activities:

- Review and sign the BHHEP Contract Agreement.
- Provide a completed W9 form.
- Review and sign the Permission to Release Academic Information (FERPA) Release.
- Obtain copies of ChildLine, State Police, and FBI Clearances for the provider agency.
- Receive the 1099 from BHARP for tax purposes.
- Obtain copies of loan lender statements.



Taxes are not withheld as part of the BHHEP. A 1099 will be issued to the student by BHARP and the student would need to consult your tax advisor for further guidance on satisfying tax requirements.

**Who can assist me during the program?**

County staff and the BHARP BHHEP Lead will be the primary contact for your program. The primary contact will be able to answer or ensure your questions are answered and needs are met. This individual would be able to process all questions regarding the program.

Additional support can be provided by the BHARP BHHEP Lead that may also answer questions related to the BHHEP.

**BHARP BHHEP Lead**

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