



Executive Summary

Report 2: Opportunities for the Workforce

Finding care for mental health or substance use disorders is a challenge for many people, but marginalized groups in Ohio have the added hurdle of locating someone that shares a similar racial and/or ethnic background. Having a racial and/or ethnic match between a patient and provider leads to more culturally appropriate and effective care. This is according to the second in a series of research reports on behavioral health and racial and ethnic equity from Central State University, Ohio University, Multiethnic Advocates for Cultural Competency and the Mental Health & Addiction Advocacy Coalition. However, in Ohio, there are not enough behavioral health professionals of color to serve marginalized communities. Increasing racial and ethnic diversity and expanding training around cultural competency for all providers will improve Ohio's behavioral health outcomes.

Findings

Overall, the behavioral health workforce does not reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the population of Ohio. For example, 12.5% of Ohioans identify as Black, but according to available data from licensing boards, less than 5% of psychologists and psychiatrists are Black. Further, in rural areas, behavioral health professionals of all races and ethnicities are scarce. People of color living outside of major metropolitan areas are unlikely to find a provider with a similar cultural background.

The research partners interpreted the findings from their data analysis and reviewed information from a variety of

stakeholders to develop recommendations, highlights of which include:

- Center BIPOC voices and ideas in planning and decision making.
- Improve collection and use of data on providers' race, ethnicity, languages spoken, where they practice, and their specialties.
- Require cultural competency training for existing and future providers, licensing boards, decision makers and client facing staff at all educational institutions and organizations providing behavioral health services.
- Develop a pipeline for BIPOC to enter into and stay in behavioral health careers by introducing opportunities to middle and high schoolers. For higher education, establish scholarships, paid internships, and other financial supports for students of color.

Summary

Knowing that there is a significant gap between the number of existing behavioral health professionals of color and the number needed, a collaborative effort is required to implement initiatives to address this gap. Importantly, people of color must be the ones identifying what the problems are as well as approaches for addressing them. Cultural and linguistic competency training is essential for everyone. It provides the tools necessary to understand the need for, and best ways to change education, training, hiring, and career advancement in behavioral health.



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