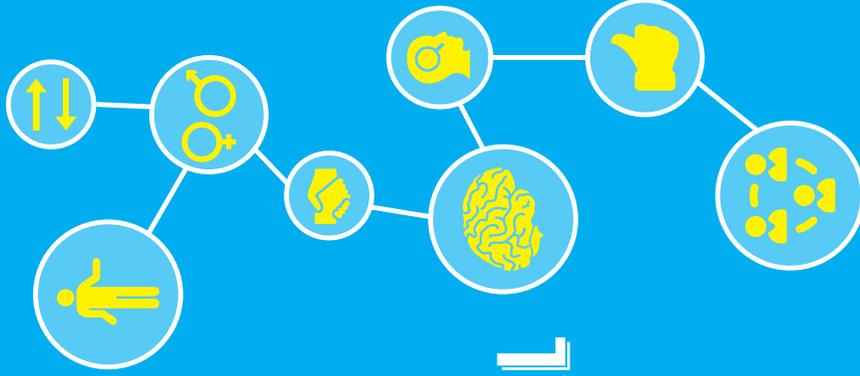


# WHY YOU SHOULD CONSIDER A CAREER IN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



HBCU Center for Excellence  
in Behavioral Health

Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences



This booklet was developed under the leadership of Dr. Gail Mattox, HBCU-CFE Project Director and Dr. Eugene Herrington, Co-Project Director.



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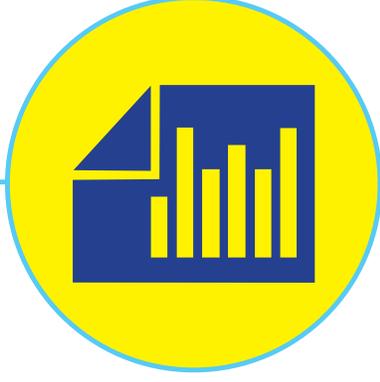
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DID YOU **KNOW**

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## WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

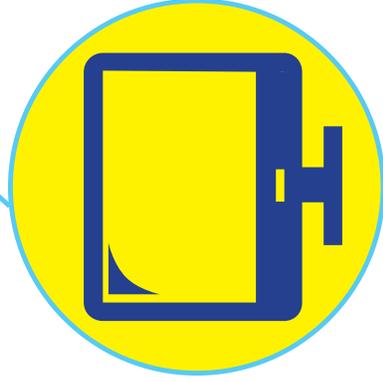
Contact the HBCU Center for Excellence in Behavioral Health to learn about our virtual site visits exploring behavioral health sites, our technical assistance programs to connect you with mentors. Sign up for our webinars on career development and various behavioral health topics.

### The HBCU Center for Excellence in Behavioral Health (HBCU-CFE)

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The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) latest National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)<sup>3</sup> from 2016 indicates the following:

- The percentage of younger adults (ages 18 to 25) in this country with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) is greater than the percentage of SMI in adults ages 26 and older
- Suicidal thoughts, plans and attempts have increased for 18 to 25-year olds
- 20.1 million age 12 or older had a substance use disorder. This includes the abuse of marijuana, cigarettes, alcohol, and prescription drugs, stimulants, hallucinogens, and opioids<sup>1</sup>
- Only 51.5% of 2 million young adults with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) receive treatment

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15-29-year olds.<sup>2,3</sup>

- There are more than 1000 suicides on college campuses yearly.<sup>2</sup>
- Risk factors for college students include: New environment, loss of a social network, loss of the safety net found at home, pressure academically or socially, isolation and alienation, lack of coping skills, difficulty adjusting to new demands of college life, decreased academic performance and subsequent feelings of failure, experimentation with drugs and alcohol.<sup>2</sup>

Drug Poisoning (Overdose) is the number one cause of injury-related death in the United States:

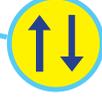
- In 2015, the age-adjusted drug-poisoning death rate was 21.1% for non-Hispanic white persons, 12.2% for non-Hispanic Black persons, and 7.7% for Hispanic persons.<sup>4</sup>
- The 2016 NSDUH report indicates 1.7 million young adults aged 18 to 25 in 2016 had a marijuana use disorder in the past year, or 5.0% of young adults.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2014, an estimated 1.9 million people had an opioid use disorder related to prescription pain relievers and an estimated 586,000 had an opioid use disorder related to heroin use.<sup>5</sup>

## WHAT IS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH?

"Behavioral health includes not only ways of promoting well-being by preventing or intervening in mental illness such as depression or anxiety, but also has as an aim of preventing or intervening in substance abuse or other addictions."<sup>8</sup>

## WHY SHOULD I PURSUE A CAREER IN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH?

- To help close the increasing gap in health care access and health outcomes for racial and ethnic minorities
- To increase the number of racial and ethnic minority workers
- To provide for a more culturally competent workforce to meet the needs of the expanding minority population of the United States
- To promote student behavioral health and student retention



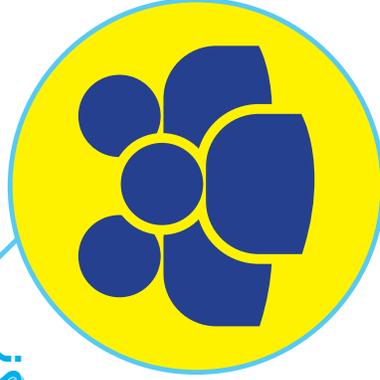
## HOW DO I PREPARE FOR A CAREER IN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH?

- Advocate for behavioral health events on your college campus
- Become a peer educator
- Learn about internship opportunities
- Shadow professionals in the field
- Explore fellowship opportunities with National Organizations such as:
  - o SAMHSA's Minority Fellowship Programs
  - o National Association for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors (NAADAC) Fellowships
  - o Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities (HACU) Internship Program
  - o American Psychiatric Association Diversity Leadership Fellowship
  - o American Psychological Association Minority Fellowship Program
  - o The HBCU-Center for Excellence in Behavioral Health Workforce Expansion Sub-Award Program

So why should you consider a career in behavioral health? Because, as noted by SAMHSA "behavioral health is essential to health, prevention works, treatment is effective, people recover"

## WHAT ARE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE NEEDS?

- To address the workforce size in general and its inadequate geographic distribution
- To address disparities in the workforce by increasing the number of racial and ethnic minority workers
- To remove the barriers that keep African-Americans from participating in behavioral health promotion activities and seeking help for behavioral health disorders
- To increase the knowledge and skills of emerging leaders who serve in communities in greatest need of behavioral health services
- To increase the number of practitioners who work with children, adolescents, and transition-age youth diagnosed with, or at risk of developing a behavioral health condition
- To provide for a more culturally competent workforce



## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH?

The terms "behavioral health" and "mental health" are often used interchangeably.<sup>6</sup>

*The term behavioral health is more comprehensive and includes:*

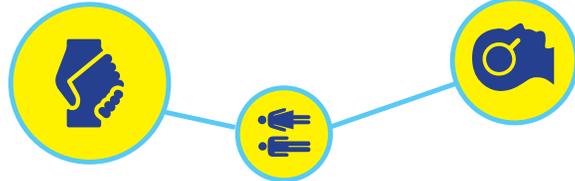
- Promotion of emotional well being
- Recognizing social determinants impacting emotional health
- Treatment for serious psychological distress and disorders
- Treatment for substance use disorders
- Prevention and early intervention strategies

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE?

Per SAMHSA, "The behavioral health workforce functions in a wide range of prevention, health care, and social service settings... that enable Americans to find effective treatments and services in their communities for mental and/or substance use disorders."<sup>47</sup>

The settings may include:

- Public and private prevention or treatment programs
- Crisis Stabilization Centers
- Community-based or inpatient treatment programs
- Primary care health delivery sites
- Federally Qualified Health Centers
- Emergency rooms
- Criminal justice systems
- Schools, colleges, universities



## WHO MAKES UP THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TEAM?

- Professional counselors
- Psychologists
- Psychiatrists
- Social workers
- Psychiatric nurses
- Marriage and family therapists
- Addiction counselors
- School psychologists
- General practitioners
- Peer professionals
- Paraprofessionals
- People in recovery
- Certified prevention specialists
- Psychiatric rehabilitation specialists
- Psychiatric aides and technicians
- Case managers
- Parent aides
- Homeless outreach specialists
- Public health professionals

Several members of the Behavioral Health workforce hold advanced degrees and are licensed. This requires a Master's Degree or higher level of education.

