National Center for Workforce Analysis: Behavioral Health Workforce 2023

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The United States faces a mental health crisis marked by rising unmet behavioral health needs across all age groups. Workforce capacity is constrained by supply and distribution challenges, compounded by additional barriers:

- **Patient-level barriers**: Stigma and affordability hinder access to care.
- **Provider-level barriers**: Limited scopes of practice, reimbursement issues, and clinician burnout reduce care quality and availability.

Key findings include:

- By 2036, significant shortages of behavioral health professionals, including addiction counselors, therapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists, are expected.
- Over half of the U.S. population lives in designated Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) as of December 2023.
- Rural areas face greater provider shortages, often relying on primary care providers for behavioral health services.
- The workforce is predominantly female, non-Hispanic White, and may not reflect the diversity of the communities served.
- Uniformity in provider practices, addressing burnout, and reimbursement challenges are critical to improving workforce accessibility.

Potential solutions include expanding integrated care models, leveraging health support workers, and increasing telehealth services to mitigate workforce shortages and limited access.

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