



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEM FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS RECOMMENDATION #19: INCENTIVIZE PROVIDERS TO JOIN THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES WORKFORCE

Recommendation Overview:

Workforce shortages have significantly impacted Montana’s behavioral health (BH) and developmental disabilities (DD) systems, particularly in rural and frontier communities, leading to reduced service delivery. **These shortages have a ripple effect throughout the system, as staffing shortfalls hinder providers’ ability to offer necessary services, limit access to quality health care, and contribute to issues like longer wait times.** Economic factors, such as the high cost of tuition for relevant education and credentials, further complicate efforts to address workforce shortages. While tuition reimbursement programs exist for various health care professions, **this recommendation provides tuition reimbursement opportunities for the BH and DD workforce, including positions such as case management staff and direct care workers.**

Additionally, this recommendation will create a dual enrollment program with the Montana Office of Public Instruction and the Montana University System, enabling Montana high school students to earn tuition-free college-level credits in BH and DD professions. Tuition-free courses allow high school students to gain insight into potential careers in these professions, broadening their horizons and helping them earn college credit. Dual enrollment programs allow states to create a pipeline for the workforce, improving the ability to recruit and retain workers.

Intended Impact:

This recommendation proposes increasing the number and geographic coverage of BH and DD workers, especially those in targeted program types, and the number of people in the pipeline for BH and DD professions in future years. Example performance measures for this recommendation may include:

- Increased workforce capacity and training.
- Increased access to community-based services.





Governor’s Budget Amounts:

Funding by Year ¹		Funding Sources	
SFY26	SFY27	State Special Revenue	Federal Funds
\$8.0M	\$250K	\$8.3M	\$0

This recommendation includes implementing and overseeing a tuition reimbursement program and operating dual enrollment classes to create a pipeline to BH and DD-related professions. The BHSFG funding request will support program implementation and oversight costs for the tuition reimbursement program and startup and initial operating costs for the dual enrollment program. Long-term sustainability funding will be required for the ongoing costs of the dual enrollment courses.

Implementation Considerations:

This Phase 1 foundational recommendation establishes the necessary infrastructure for subsequent recommendations to succeed and/or is critical to strengthening and sustaining system operations.² It is designated to receive funding in both SFY26 and SFY27 in the Governor’s Budget.

Project Requirements	Project Needs
<p>Staffing</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate staff for oversight and monitoring.
<p>System / Infrastructure</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the appropriate payment mechanism and payment intervals. • Identify the types of degrees and those under-represented in current tuition programs. • Collaborate and design with the Montana Office of Public Instruction and the Montana University System.
<p>Legislative / Regulatory</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure legislative approval for funding ongoing tuition reimbursement.
<p>Finance / Sustainability</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine whether funds outside of BHSFG will be used for the state share post-BHSFG funding.

¹ In November 2024, Governor Gianforte authorized \$100M for SFY26 and SFY27 to implement 10 recommendations identified by the BHSFG Commission. The cost estimates for this recommendation in the BHSFG final report may vary due to the timing of projected expenditures and additional adjustments.

² The BHSFG recommendations included in the Governor’s budget are all eight Phase 1 recommendations and two Phase 2 recommendations. Phase 2 BHSFG Commissioner Identified Focus Area Recommendations are those the Commission identified as a leading focus area that may be impacted by the completion of a foundational recommendation and/or are not foundational in nature.

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