



Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Marina.Parr@wtb.wa.gov | 360-709-4607

NATIONAL REPORT CITES STATE'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH STUDY, SENTINEL NETWORK

Washington offers models for other states to explore

OLYMPIA—Two important Washington efforts have been highlighted in a national report that focuses on assessing—and addressing—changing workforce needs related to behavioral health. The report from the Reforming the States Group (RSG), a bipartisan group of state health policy leaders, features case studies from three different states, including Washington, that explore how to better integrate behavioral health across the entire healthcare field.

Behavioral health encompasses mental health as well as behaviors such as substance abuse and chemical dependency. Because physical health and behavioral health issues frequently go together, there is an increased focus on finding ways to treat both issues, particularly in primary care settings.

Washington's Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) in collaboration with the University of Washington Center for Health Workforce Studies published a report late last year that provided a comprehensive look at the state's health workforce and how well it was meeting behavioral health needs. This report was cited in the RSG study.

The RSG study also showcased Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network, which regularly surveys healthcare providers across Washington on details about their changing health workforce needs. Using feedback about changing skills and roles of the health workforce, the state can more readily respond through education and training programs, policy changes, and other means. View the Sentinel Network's findings dashboard at: <http://www.wtb.wa.gov/HealthSentinel>.

Both the Sentinel Network and the behavioral health workforce study are the work of the state's Health Workforce Council, created in 2003 to address emerging health workforce needs, including personnel shortages in critical healthcare occupations. The Council includes representatives from education institutions, healthcare associations, labor organizations, and government agencies. The Workforce Board staffs the Council.

Governor Inslee and the Legislature commissioned the Behavioral Health Workforce Assessment to evaluate—and address—the state's behavioral health workforce needs. The assessment, for which an initial report was produced in late 2016, looked at barriers and potential solutions. The December 2017 final report provided more detailed findings and

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recommendations, including the need to improve reimbursement rates to attract and retain providers, streamline and standardize credentialing processes, increase access to clinical training, increase use of tele-health, and a focus on career pathways and financial support to grow this segment of the workforce.

Read the full report: <http://www.wtb.wa.gov/behavioralhealthgroup.asp>

More about the RSG study: <https://www.milbank.org/publications/behavioral-health-integration-workforce-development/>

The Workforce Board is a state agency that monitors and evaluates the state's key workforce programs and also provides leadership on policies that help all Washington residents get the education and training they need to obtain living-wage jobs.

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