

Access to high-quality behavioral health care depends on a strong, stable workforce. However, providers serving individuals with the highest and most acute needs struggle to compete with the private sector, leading to chronic staffing shortages that undermine care. A recent survey of CMHPs statewide revealed a 17% vacancy rate of positions overall and **this number jumps to a staggering 29% for crisis service workers**. We know that investments in the workforce work. An OCBH survey of providers determined that after the 2022 and 2023 legislative investments, open positions reduced by an average of 40%. This session, we can increase workforce recruitment and retention through proven strategies by passing HB 2024. The bill will accomplish this by:

Incentivizing work in the public system

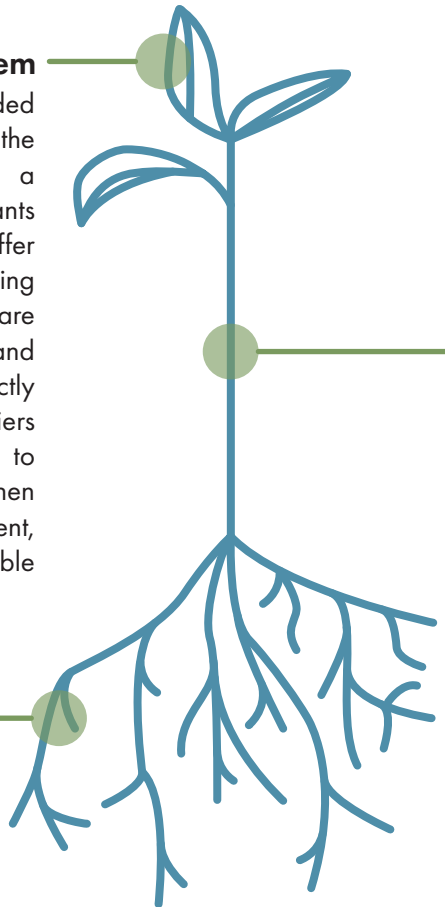
In alignment with the Governor's Recommended Budget, this bill allocates \$20 million to the Oregon Health Authority to establish a Workforce Incentive Grant Program. These grants will allow organizational providers to offer meaningful workforce supports—including housing stipends, tuition assistance, child care subsidies, and other incentives—to attract and retain qualified professionals. By directly addressing the financial and logistical barriers that often drive behavioral health workers to private-sector roles, this program will strengthen the public system's ability to provide consistent, high-quality care to Oregon's most vulnerable populations.

Providing opportunities for training and apprenticeship

The United We Heal Labor Management Trust offers participating providers access to enhanced apprenticeship and training programs while leveraging federal matching funds. These programs help attract new individuals into the behavioral health system while also providing opportunities for career advancement for those seeking a higher level certification. HB 2024 allocates \$5 million to United We Heal to expand access to the Trust.

Increasing wages for those serving individuals with the most acute need

Right now in our system, workers providing care for people with the most complex needs are paid the least. Providers often leave organizations that provide treatment to high-acuity individuals to enter private practice where they can make more money and work fewer hours. Increasing reimbursement for workers who provide outpatient services like street outreach and medication-assisted treatment as well as residential services is key to retaining these workers in the public behavioral health system. HB 2024 provides \$20 million to OHA for a targeted reimbursement increase via incentive payment for these providers so workers are able to stay where communities need them most, serving the Oregonians who need it most.



The critical investments that the Legislature recently made will not be successful or increase access unless they are accompanied by significant efforts to recruit and retain behavioral health workers in the public system. Investing in workforce stability means investing in better outcomes for individuals and communities statewide.



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