



STATE SNAPSHOT

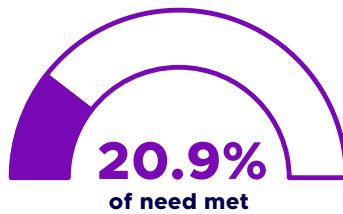


Washington

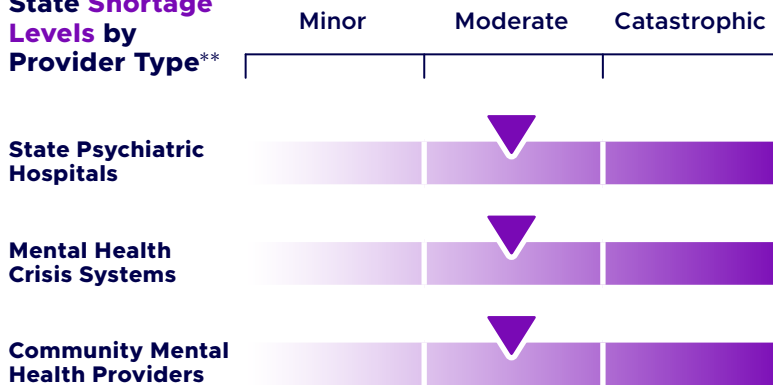
Mental Health Workforce Shortages

Having a robust pipeline of mental health professionals, paraprofessionals, and peers can help mitigate shortages and get people the care they need sooner.

State Progress in Meeting Recommended Psychiatrist Ratios*



State Shortage Levels by Provider Type**



In-Network Reimbursement[†]

Using Medicare rates as a benchmark, insurers pay:

Psychiatrists

\$0.79

for every \$1.00 paid to medical/surgical clinicians

Therapists

\$0.62

for every \$1.00 paid to physician assistants

Medicare rates often undervalue mental health services, so psychiatrists and therapists may be paid far less than indicated.

Out-of-Network Use[†]

When patients have to go out of network, care often becomes more difficult to afford.

People had to go out of network

7.1 times more often

for mental health care than for medical/surgical care

Policy Progress

State's progress in enacting policies that strengthen and grow the mental health workforce.

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|-----------------------|--|
| Meaningful progress | |
| Partial progress | |
| Little or no progress | |

Developing the Pipeline

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| Establish a mental health workforce development center | |
| Expand the mental health provider pipeline through: | |
| Scholarship incentives | |
| Stipends | |
| Loan repayment programs | |
| Require health plans to reimburse supervised services by pre-licensure candidates in commercial insurance plans | |

Bolstering the Existing Workforce

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| Require Medicaid reimbursement of youth peer services | |
| Require mental health care to be paid comparably to physical health care using an external benchmark | |
| Cover the Collaborative Care Model of integrated mental health and primary care services in: | |
| Commercial insurance plans | |
| Medicaid plan | |
| Join interstate licensure compacts: | |
| Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact (PSYPACT) | |
| Counseling Compact | |
| Social Work Licensure Compact | |
| School Psychologist Compact | |

Harnessing Data and Technology

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| Publicly report data on provider supply and distribution | |
| Require commercial plans to cover telemental health services at in-person rates | |

* KFF, "Mental Health Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs)," December 31, 2025.

** NRI, "State Behavioral Health Workforce Shortages and Initiatives, 2023–2024," October 2024.

† RTI, "Behavioral Health Parity - Pervasive Disparities in Access to In-Network Care Continue," April 17, 2024. Metric updated March 18, 2026.