



2025
COUNSELING
REGULATORY BOARDS
ANNUAL SUMMIT
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AUSTIN, TEXAS

Expanding Workforce Capacity Through Regulation and Legislation

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Panelists

Brian Carnahan, Executive Director (OH)

Robert Romig, Deputy Executive Director (TX)

Ashleigh Irving, Executive Director (FL)

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Need for Workforce Development

- **160–169 million Americans** live in areas officially designated as mental health provider shortage areas (HPSAs)
- **50–55% of U.S. counties** have no mental health providers
- Around **121 million people** (as of 2024) live in federal mental-health HPSAs; HRSA estimates the country still needs **over 6,000 additional providers** to meet minimum needs
- Nationally, the workforce meets only **~26% of mental health needs**—a 74% shortfall—and is missing about **6,200 providers** to reach adequacy



Reasons for Shortage of Providers



Rising Demand

mental illness prevalence was about 1 in 5 adults; only ~43–54% get treatment. COVID-19 accelerated this uptake by ~20% between 2019–2021



Workforce Aging & Burnout

Provider turnover rates are high accompanied by high burnout rates.



Financial Disincentives

Low reimbursement rates (especially Medicaid), high training debt (~\$79K–\$250K+), and lower salaries compared to other fields



Geographic Disparities

rural and underserved communities face the worst shortages; 55% of rural counties lack providers



Why are Regulations & Standards Important?

- Licensing and credentialing ensure providers meet minimum training requirements.
- Regulation prevents unqualified individuals from delivering services.
- Ensures providers adhere to ethical codes.
- Licensing boards have authority to discipline or remove practitioners who commit misconduct.
- Protect the most vulnerable within our population.

Balancing Increased Efficiency with Public Protection



Reducing Barriers and Increasing Efficiency Across Regulation may:

- Improve access to care
- Lower costs for providers and clients
- Reduce barriers to entering the field which may increase the diversity of the workforce
- Increase competition
- Address inconsistencies of licensing requirements across states

But are there areas of risks?

Important Considerations

- Client safety – especially the most vulnerable
- Ensuring appropriate training to reduce misdiagnosis and ineffective treatment
- Necessary to have proper oversight to promote adherence to ethical codes
- Important to maintain a formal complaint process
- Consumer confusion – misleading titles
- Lack of informed choice – clients may not understand the difference between providers
- Vital to have ongoing consideration of how to reduce barriers to access while appropriately protecting the public

