Behavioral Health Workforce Development Strategies for the State Mental Health Authority (SMHA)

Crisis Jam

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State Mental Health Authority as the Setting

- Common challenges
  - Personnel cabinet statutes and regulations
  - Procurement and contracting processes
  - Leadership turnover
- Variances between states
  - Population density and topography
  - Existing system of care
  - Breadth of workforce shortage
  - Political structure and climate
  - Available funding for services and innovation

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Creating Opportunities for Sharing & Replication

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE RESOURCE GUIDE

APRIL 2023
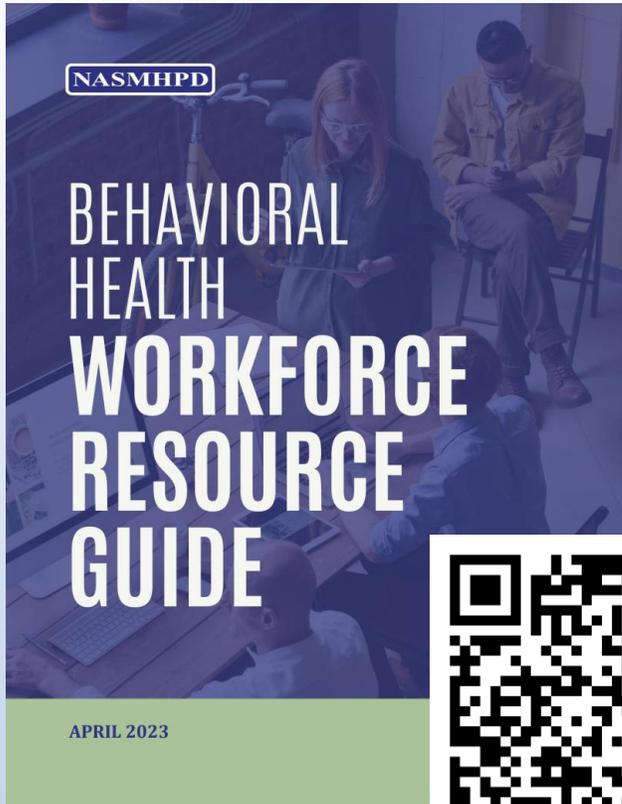
Cross-sector Strategies
> Decrease demand for acute services
> Assure adequate reimbursement
> Update statutes/regulations/policies

National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL) framework*
> Understand needs
> Increase supply
> Expand reach
> Address distribution
> Retain professionals

* State Strategies to Recruit and Retain the Behavioral Health Workforce

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Trends in State Level Strategies

- Developing new entry programs and incentives
- Eliminating barriers to entering the field
- Expanding peer support and adjunct roles
- Increasing the use of technology
- Improving wages and benefits
- Creating supportive work environments
- Focusing on equity and diversity

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Reimagine the Treatment Team

- Expand pool of potential candidates by updating HR policies
- Create new roles
  - Peer support, navigators, liaisons
  - Interns, apprentices, mentors
  - Administrative assistants
- Revise current job descriptions
  - Background checks
  - Educational requirements
  - Supported employment opportunities (MH, SUD, I/DD, BI)
- Assure accommodations for disabilities
  - Environment of care
  - Workflow
  - Communication

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Technology First

- Explore technological options before adding duties to staff
- Telehealth, remote work/hybrid, flexible hours
- Multiple uses of I-Pad for mobile crisis & crisis stabilization:
  - Contact with family/support
  - Individualized learning
  - Adaptive communication (plain language, videos, spoken word, interactive)
  - Relaxation techniques, journaling
- Interpreter services and communication devices
- Decrease administrative burden
  - Record review and trend analysis
- Enhance onboarding, staff training, and ongoing education
  - Using AI as a training tool

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Creating Supportive Work Environments

- Is your work culture trauma-informed for staff?
  - Do they have a voice and choice?
  - Do they feel empowered, respected, supported, and appreciated?
  - How do you know?
- Are your staff skilled at conflict resolution?
- Embrace a New Perspective
  - Attract vs. Recruit
  - Engage vs. Retain

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Cross-sector Partnerships for Collective Impact

- Who are your traditional partners and who else needs to be at the table?
  - Create synergy
  - Decrease duplicative effort

- Workforce development experts
  - Different skill set than human resources
  - Develop a strategic plan with short- and long-term goals
  - Create a trauma-informed workplace culture

- Higher education
  - Career paths using stacked credentials and college credit
  - Program evaluation and satisfaction surveys

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Tips to Building Innovation Infrastructure

1. Communicate the changing narrative
2. Consult with workforce experts
3. Create a governance/advisory group
4. Secure financial support
5. Embed technology advances and solutions
6. Use data partnerships and resources
7. Identify management structures and staff support
8. Prioritize cross-sector collaboration
9. Establish metrics and evaluation processes
10. Combine quick wins with long-term approaches

❖ Developed by the Kentucky Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities as part of their 2023 TTI project

Top 10 Tips for
BUILDING YOUR WORKFORCE INNOVATION INFRASTRUCTURE

1 **Communicate the changing narrative** around helping professions and the central importance of workforce to the future of behavioral health.

2 **Consult with workforce experts** and organizations to build shared expertise critical to successful workforce innovation and development.

3 **Create a governance/advisory group** or groups that offer access to ideas, expertise, and collaboration needed to scale innovations.

4 **Secure financial support** to enable and sustain workforce expansion and innovation

5 **Embed technology advances and solutions** to "future-proof" your strategies.

6 **Use data partnerships and resources** to inform and evaluate workforce efforts.

7 **Identify management structures and staff support** to build internal capacity to support implementation of workforce initiatives.

8 **Prioritize cross-sector collaboration** to maximize impact within the larger behavioral health and developmental and intellectual disabilities workforce ecosystem.

9 **Establish metrics and evaluation processes** required to prove that new approaches are making a difference – and to inform adjustments when they aren't.

10 **Combine quick wins with long-term approaches.** Systems' change takes time – and executing small innovation projects right away builds trust and fuels next steps.

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988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Centers' Workforce Challenges and Barriers: Analysis & Recommendations

See here for the report.

Data Matters

- Can we demonstrate a concrete impact?

- How do we quantify "savings"?
  - To criminal justice system, to BH system, other key stakeholders
  - Mitigating risk

- Are we aggregating data that is important to our funders (Congress)?

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NRI: Analytics Improving Behavioral Health

❖NASMHPD Research Institute, Inc.
  o [Home | NRI: No Person's life will be limited by mental illness or addiction (nri-inc.org)](#)
  o Offers data and research services to stakeholders of behavioral health services.

❖Focus Areas
  o Performance Measurement
  o Public Behavioral Health Agencies
  o Criminal Justice
  o First Episode Psychosis
  o State Profiles

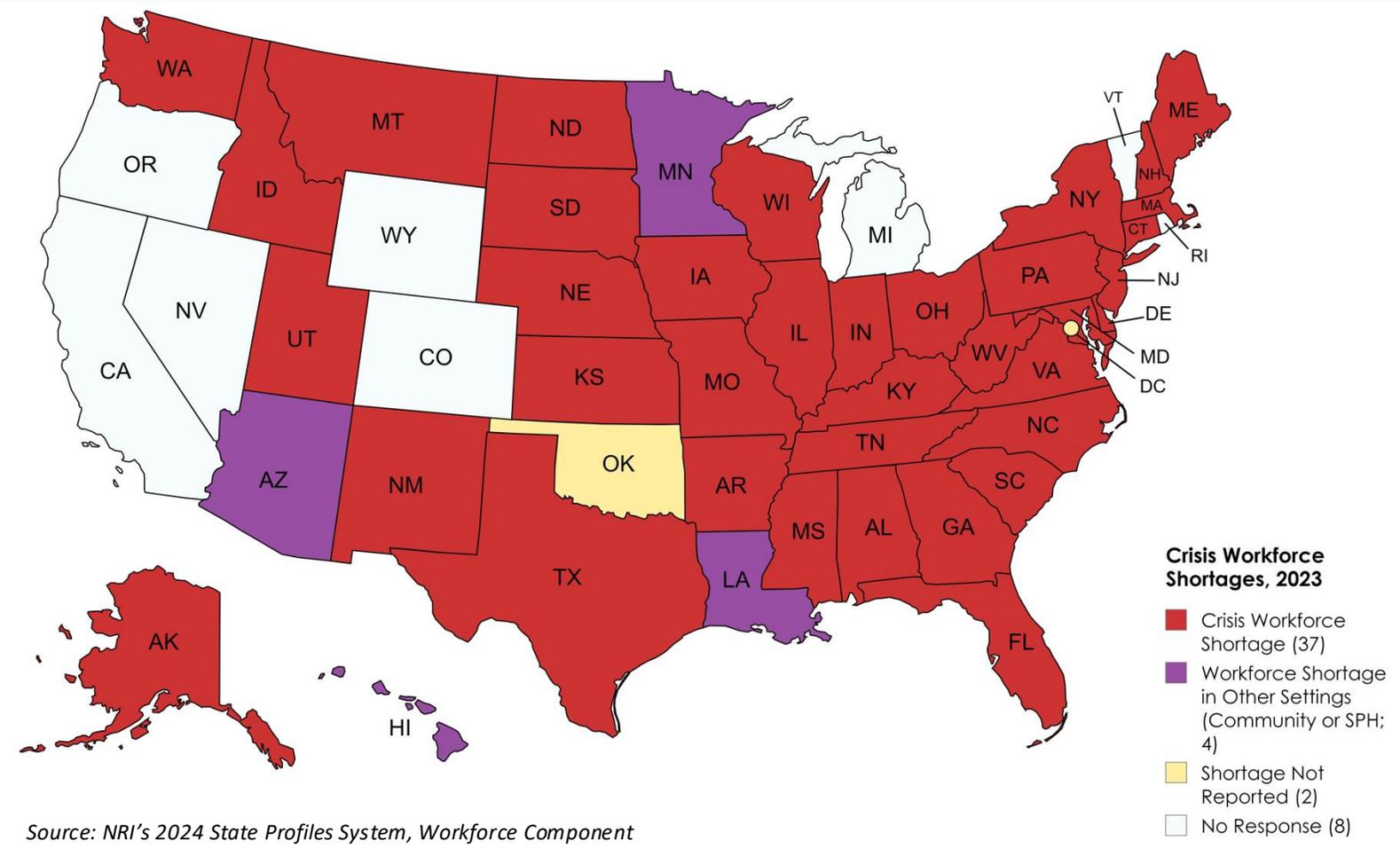QR Code for NRI's State Profiling System

❖State Profiling System:
  o Data dating back 1996
  o Public reports available on public site; data for states on restricted access site

❖Behavioral Health Performance Measurement System (BHPMS)

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Workforce Shortage Across the Crisis Continuum

Source: NRI's 2024 State Profiles System, Workforce Component

Crisis Workforce Shortages, 2023

- 🟥 Crisis Workforce Shortage (37)
- 🟪 Workforce Shortage in Other Settings (Community or SPH; 4)
- 🟨 Shortage Not Reported (2)
- ⬜ No Response (8)

State Behavioral Health Workforce Shortages and Initiatives, 2023

o States with a crisis workforce shortage on the map may also be experiencing workforce shortages in other community settings and state hospitals

o Overall, of **43 responding states**, workforce shortages exist in:
- 35 - state hospitals
- 37 - community settings

o 41 states have workforce shortages in state hospitals, crisis settings, and other community settings
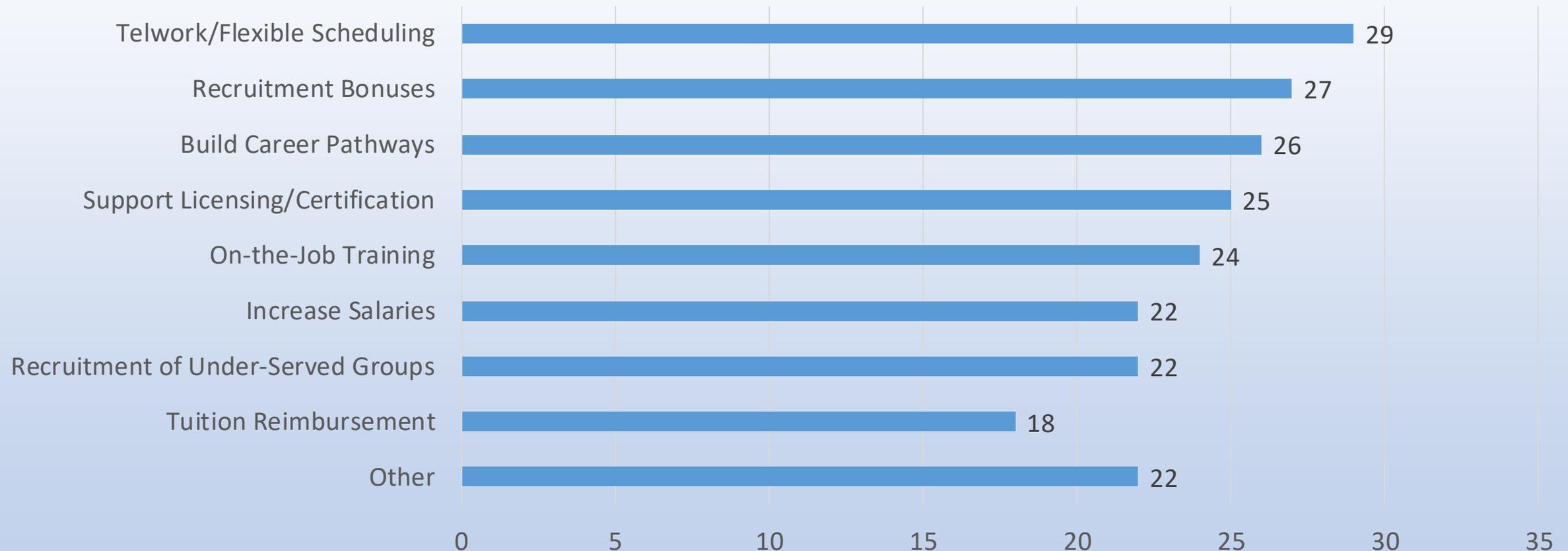
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NRI Data on Workforce Challenges: Growing the Behavioral Health Workforce

State Initiatives to Grow the Behavioral Health Workforce, 2024 (n=43)

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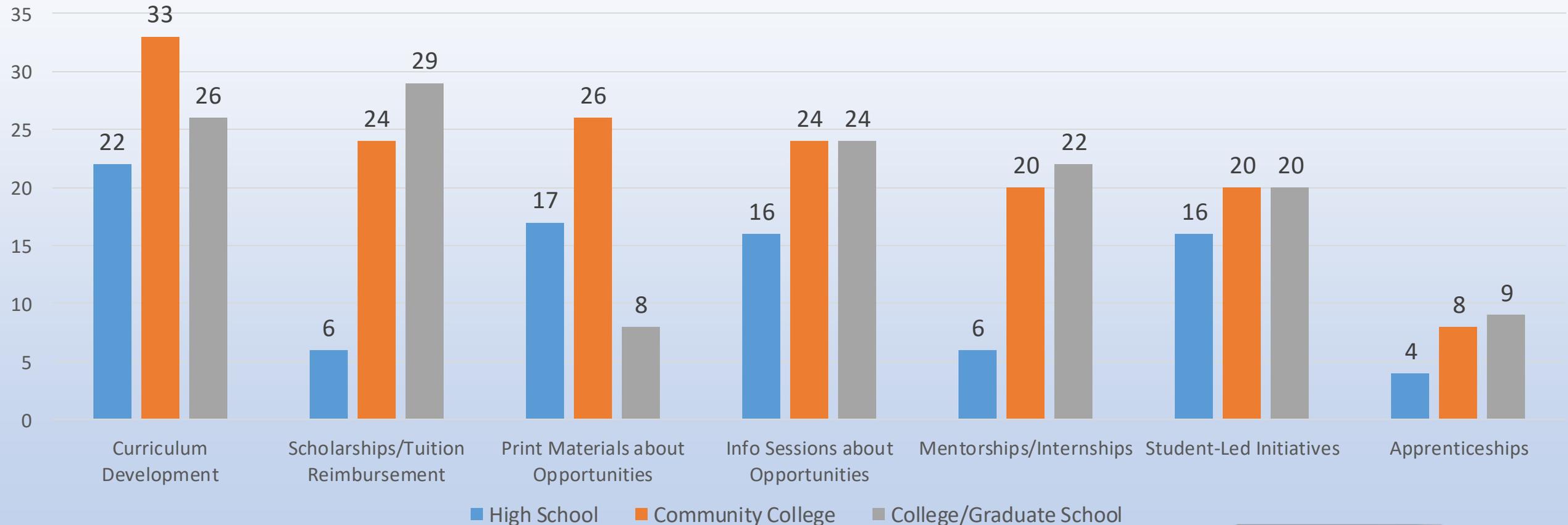
NRI Data on Workforce Challenges: Recruiting the Behavioral Health Workforce

State Behavioral Health Workforce Recruitment Initiatives, 2024 (n=43)

Initiative	Value
Telwork/Flexible Scheduling	29
Recruitment Bonuses	27
Build Career Pathways	26
Support Licensing/Certification	25
On-the-Job Training	24
Increase Salaries	22
Recruitment of Under-Served Groups	22
Tuition Reimbursement	18
Other	22

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Connected and Strong Papers

- [Growing and Strengthening the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Workforce](#), 2024 (See QR Code)
  - Employee and organizational-level insights on barriers to recruitment, retention, and wellness among crisis response and behavioral health workforce.
    - Low pay and funding barriers are the biggest challenge to recruitment and retention.
    - Bureaucratic requirements at the state level for job posting and approval processes hinder the hiring process.
  - Highlights initiatives to grow and strengthen the workforce.
    - Utilizing peer support professionals and bachelor's-level staff with appropriate supervision, can increase the workforce.
    - Championing employee wellness is critical to retaining a qualified workforce.

2024

Growing and Strengthening the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Workforce

Connected and Strong

Third in a Series of Ten Technical Assistance Briefs to Foster Unity and uity Across Crisis Response and Treatment Systems

SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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THANK YOU!

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