

The mental health crisis in Florida is steadily rising, highlighting the urgent need for trained behavioral health professionals to deliver these services. **Florida ranks 43rd** in the nation with a **troubling patient-to-provider ratio of 510:1**, compared to Massachusetts, the top-ranked state, with a ratio of 140:1.

As the demand for mental health and substance use services continues to increase, the need for a skilled workforce to deliver these vital services also grows. Unfortunately, a severe workforce shortage is limiting access to care, leaving thousands of Floridians without the treatment they desperately need. The lack of support, combined with high levels of educational debt, discourages many professionals from entering or remaining in the behavioral health field, exacerbating an already critical crisis.

Legislation in the Right Direction

Legislation was filed last session that would establish a mental health professional loan forgiveness program. This legislation would encourage qualified professionals to work in Florida's 212 mental health professional shortage areas. Removing financial barriers will incentivize retention and recruitment of careers in behavioral health.

The **Florida Hospital Association supports** policies that prioritize the behavioral health workforce by **expanding loan forgiveness opportunities** for behavioral health professionals, helping to address the workforce shortage.

Projected Shortages by 2037



7,720

Mental Health Counselors



6,750

Addiction Counselors



3,410

Psychiatrists



8,130

Psychologists

Source: [HRSA Workforce Dashboard](#)



Support Legislation to Recruit and Retain Behavioral Health Professionals