

June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026

# The Behavioral Health *New Deal*

Growing the Behavioral Health  
Workforce Across New Mexico

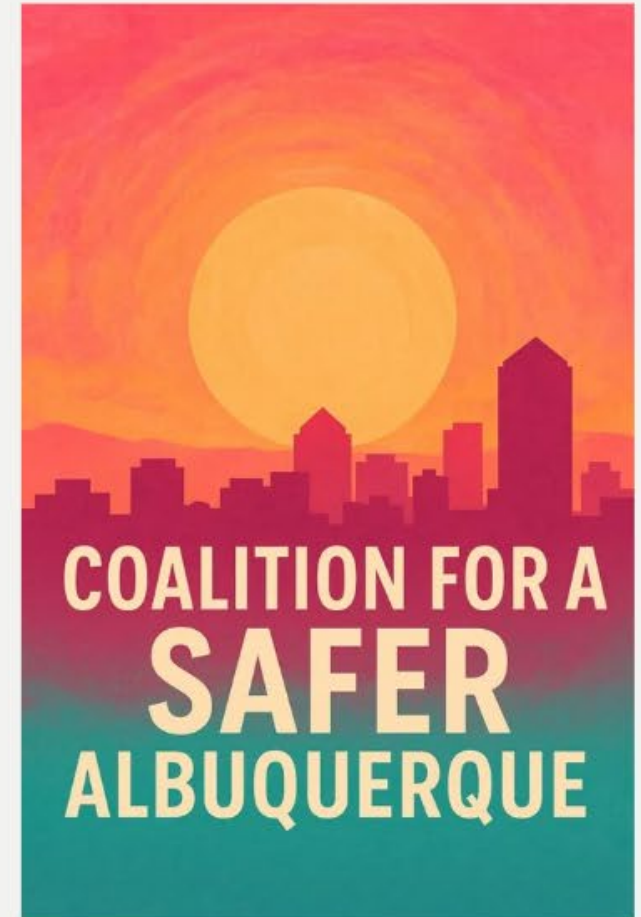
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# Coalition for a *Safer* Albuquerque

- Founded in 2020, the Coalition for a Safer Albuquerque is a community-based organization made up of residents, service providers, advocates, and individuals with lived experience of homelessness, behavioral health challenges, substance use, and disability. **Members bring decades of professional and lived experience in homelessness services, behavioral health, peer support, public health, and community safety.**
- The Coalition works alongside public agencies, service providers, and community partners to advance practical, people-centered solutions that improve community well-being. The Coalition has helped support innovative community safety efforts in Albuquerque, including the development of the Albuquerque Community Safety Department, and continues to focus on expanding access to services for the city's most vulnerable residents.



# The *Challenge*

New Mexico faces workforce shortages across nearly every health profession, including behavioral health.

- **The Legislative Finance Committee projects a shortage of approximately 5,000 behavioral health workers by 2030**
- **The state has made historic investments in behavioral health through: SB3, Medicaid, Opioid settlement funds, Housing initiatives, Workforce development programs**
- **Funding alone will not solve the crisis**
- **The biggest implementation challenge is workforce capacity**
- **Without enough trained professionals, New Mexico cannot fully deliver the services it has invested in**

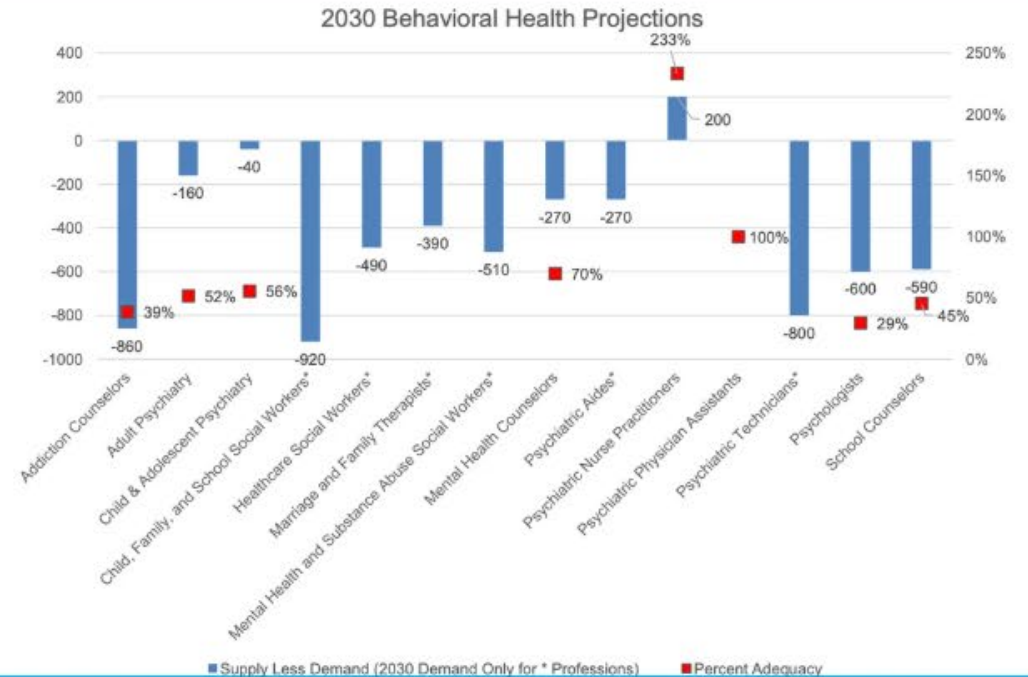
The question is no longer whether we should invest in behavioral health—it is whether we can **build the workforce needed to make those investments succeed.**

# Projected Shortages

- **860** Addiction Counselors
- **160** Adult Psychiatrists
- **40** Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists
- **920** Child, Family and School Social Workers
- **490** Healthcare Social Workers
- **390** Marriage and Family Therapists
- **510** Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers
- **270** Mental Health Counselors
- **270** Psychiatric Aides
- **800** Psychiatric Technicians
- **600** Psychologists
- **590** School Counselors



## 2030 Behavioral Health Projections

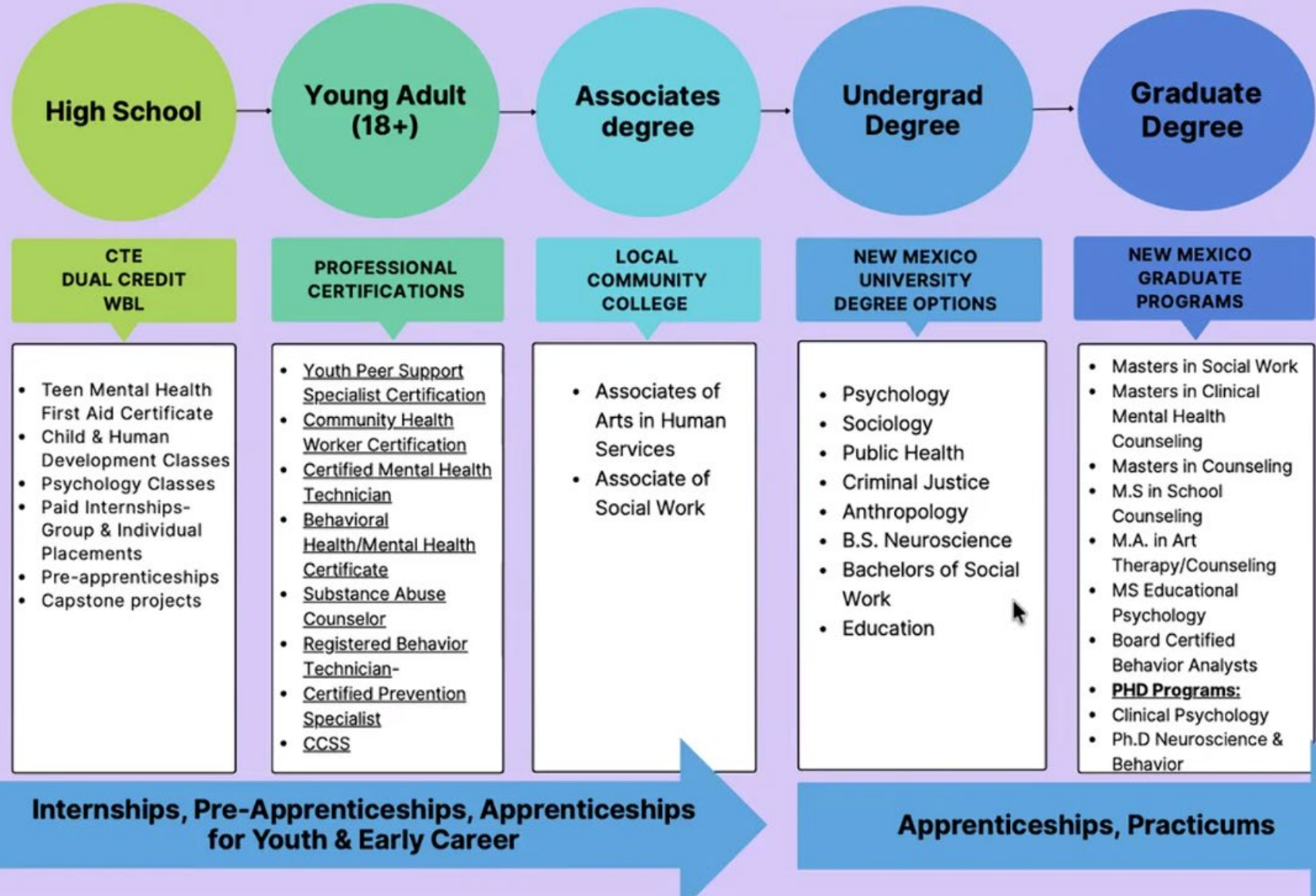


# Recommendation #1

## Create a Behavioral Health Pre-Apprenticeship & Apprenticeship Career Pathways Fund

- Research consistently shows that paid work-based learning dramatically improves workforce retention, particularly in rural communities.
- Young people should be able to move directly from high school to certification to employment to college to licensure without leaving New Mexico.
- New Mexico has invested heavily in higher education. We now need to build the front door into the profession.

# Behavioral Health & Human Services Pathways



# Recommendation #2

## Expand State-Wide Community College Behavioral Health Careers Initiatives

We must invest in workforce production. Provide targeted funding to community colleges to:

- **Expand peer support training**
- **Expand community health worker programs**
- **Expand substance use counselor programs**
- **Develop new behavioral health certifications**
- **Increase faculty capacity**
- **Support rural course sharing**

Community colleges are the most scalable workforce engine in the state. They should become the primary entry point into behavioral health careers.

# Recommendation #3

## Expand the Opportunity Scholarship to Graduate Behavioral Health Degrees to build the clinical workforce.

The Opportunity Scholarship program should be expanded to include master's and doctoral programs in social work, counseling, psychology, and psychiatric nursing.

- New Mexico has already demonstrated that tuition assistance increases workforce production. Behavioral health should receive the same strategic investment.
- To solve shortages of clinicians, therapists, and prescribers, we must help students to reach licensure.

# Braiding Existing *Funding* Streams

This is not solely a legislative investment. **New Mexico can weave together:**

- *SB3 Workforce Investments*
- *Medicaid Reimbursement*
- *County Behavioral Health Tax Revenue*
- *Opioid Settlement Funds*
- *Opportunity Scholarship Funds*
- *Federal Apprenticeship Grants*
- *Youth Mental Health Corps Funding*
- *Public Allies*
- *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Funds*

**The goal is to align existing investments toward a common workforce development strategy.**

# *Thank you*

These recommendations are not intended to be the final answer, but rather the beginning of a broader conversation about how we **grow, support, and retain** the next generation of behavioral health professionals.

