



WILLIAM JAMES
COLLEGE

Center for Workforce Development

Impact Highlights 2021-2025

**BUILDING A DIVERSE,
COMMUNITY-ROOTED
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
WORKFORCE**



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Executive Summary

From 2021–2025, the *Center for Workforce Development (CWD)* at William James College emerged as a statewide leader in building a more diverse, culturally responsive, and community-rooted behavioral health workforce. Created in response to persistent workforce shortages and inequities in access to care, the CWD has developed a comprehensive pathway that supports individuals from early career exploration through graduate training, leadership development, and systems-level change.

Over four years, the CWD supported 475 participants, 80% of whom identify with populations underrepresented in the behavioral health workforce. Collectively, these participants contributed more than 300,000 hours of service, training, mentorship, and fieldwork across schools, community mental health agencies, health centers, hospitals, and nonprofit organizations. Through this work, participants helped expand access to care for more than 4,300 clients, many in historically underserved communities across Massachusetts and beyond.

The CWD's impact is driven by an integrated workforce model that combines paid career pathways, academic training, mentorship, and community-based partnerships. Career pathway programs such as the Behavioral Health Service Corps, Community Health Workers Training Program, Skills Training for Equitable Pathways, and Men of Color Career Advancement initiative provide accessible, supported entry points into behavioral health careers—reducing financial barriers while strengthening frontline capacity. Graduate training and scholarship programs expand clinical service delivery in high-need settings, particularly for children, adolescents, and families. Leadership initiatives prepare early career professionals

to advance into supervisory and administrative roles, strengthening organizational stability and long-term workforce retention.

Community partnership is central to the CWD's approach. Through initiatives such as the Haitian Mental Health Network and collaborations with schools, public health agencies, and community-based organizations, the CWD extends workforce development beyond the classroom—supporting mental health literacy, youth career exposure, culturally grounded services, and multilingual access to care. These partnerships ensure that workforce investment directly benefits communities while building trusted, sustainable pathways into the profession.

In parallel with training and service delivery, the CWD advances research and policy work focused on workforce equity and sustainability. Studies examining behavioral health workforce retention and licensure barriers have informed statewide conversations on provider wellbeing, career advancement, and systems reform. By elevating the voices of underrepresented providers, the CWD contributes actionable insights that support long-term change in behavioral health systems.

Together, these efforts reflect a holistic, equity driven model of workforce development—one that strengthens individual career mobility, expands service capacity, and builds leadership from within the communities most affected by behavioral health disparities.

As demand for culturally responsive, multilingual, and community-rooted behavioral health providers continues to grow, the CWD is focused on the future: scaling proven workforce pathways, deepening partnerships, expanding leadership development, and advancing research that informs policy and practice. The work documented here demonstrates



what is possible through collaboration—and points to the opportunities ahead for partners committed to strengthening the behavioral health workforce and the communities it serves.

Who We Are

The Center for Workforce Development (CWD) at William James College was established to address one of the most urgent challenges facing behavioral health systems today: the shortage of culturally responsive, well trained providers serving high need communities.

Since 2021, the CWD has built a set of interconnected career pathways—spanning early career exposure and paraprofessional training through graduate education, leadership development, and policy-shaping research. Our work is grounded in equity, community partnership, and the belief that the behavioral health workforce should reflect the lived experiences, languages, and cultures of the communities it serves.

Our Impact at a Glance (2021–2025)

Over four years, the CWD has demonstrated what is possible when education, community, and systems work together.

These outcomes represent more than numbers—they reflect increased access to care, strengthened community capacity, and long-term workforce sustainability

475

individuals trained across career pathway, graduate, and leadership programs

80%

of participants from populations underrepresented in behavioral health

300,000+

hours of combined service, training, mentorship, and fieldwork

4,300+

clients served across schools, community agencies, health centers, and hospitals

90+

employer and community partners statewide.

Our Workforce Development Model

The CWD operates through a laddered, integrated workforce development model designed to meet people where they are and support long-term career growth in the behavioral health field. This approach recognizes that building a strong workforce requires more than training alone—it requires access, support, community partnership, and leadership development at every stage.

Our Approach

The CWD’s model is grounded in five core strategies. Together, these elements ensure that workforce development is not extractive—but reciprocal, community-rooted, and sustainable, benefiting both emerging professionals and the communities they serve.



Accessible, paid entry points into behavioral health careers— combining stipends, tuition-free academic credit, and financial support to reduce barriers



Community-based placements aligned with real workforce and service needs



Culturally responsive mentorship and supervision that center identity, belonging, and professional growth



Leadership development that strengthens organizations and systems from within



Program evaluation and learning to assess outcomes, refine models, and inform continuous improvement





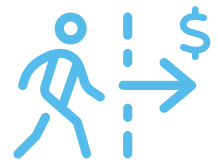
Spotlight Programs

The three flagship programs below highlight how the CWD's integrated approach—spanning access, training, and leadership development—drives measurable outcomes and sustainable workforce change through community partnerships.



Behavioral Health Service Corps

A paid, year long pathway for emerging professionals



The Behavioral Health Service Corps (BHSC) is a flagship career pathway initiative that provides recent college graduates with full-time, paid placements in community-based behavioral health settings. The program pairs hands-on service with intentional mentorship and graduate-level coursework, creating a supported bridge from early career exploration to long-term professional advancement.

WHY IT MATTERS

BHSC addresses critical workforce gaps by:

- Creating a direct, supported on ramp into behavioral health careers
- Reducing economic barriers through paid placements and academic credit
- Strengthening staffing capacity in under resourced community settings

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

- 89 participants completed the program between 2021–2025
- Participants delivered services across community agencies, schools, and health systems
- In 2025, the program expanded beyond Massachusetts with the launch of a Rhode Island cohort



Today, the BHSC is recognized nationally as a scalable, high-impact model for paid workforce pathways—benefiting emerging professionals, employer partners, and communities that rely on a prepared and culturally diverse behavioral health workforce.



Community Health Workers Training Program

Building frontline capacity in underserved communities

The Community Health Workers (CHW) Training Program strengthens the behavioral health workforce by supporting individuals at the pre-baccalaureate level through certification, mentorship, paid field placements, and academic pathways into behavioral health careers. Grounded in community partnership, the program prepares CHWs to serve as trusted connectors between systems of care and the communities most affected by health inequities.



WHY IT MATTERS

The CHW Training Program plays a critical role in workforce equity by:

- Expanding culturally and linguistically responsive care
- Strengthening trust and engagement between providers and communities
- Creating clear pathways for upward mobility for frontline workers

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

- 105 CHWs trained between 2021–2025
- 37,000+ of fieldwork hours delivered in community settings
- Graduates moved into roles including case managers, school-based paraprofessionals, and community support specialists, expanding frontline capacity across systems

This program demonstrates how community-rooted training models can simultaneously strengthen workforce supply, improve service quality, and build sustainable bridges between behavioral health systems and the communities they serve.

Leadership in Community Behavioral Health

Developing the next generation of systems leaders

The Leadership in Community Behavioral Health (LCBH) Fellowship prepares early career clinicians to step into supervisory, administrative, and systems-level leadership roles within community-based behavioral health organizations. Through structured leadership training, mentorship, and professional support, LCBH strengthens the leadership infrastructure essential to sustainable, high quality care.



WHY IT MATTERS

LCBH addresses critical workforce challenges by:

- Filling leadership gaps in high need community settings
- Improving retention and career advancement through mentorship and mobility
- Building equity centered organizational leadership that reflects the communities served

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

- 60+ leaders trained across LCBH
- Fellows advanced into roles including clinical supervisors, program directors, and administrators
- Alumni form a sustained, statewide leadership network, strengthening collaboration and shared learning across organizations

By investing in leadership development, the CWD ensures that career pathways do not stop at entry—but extend into long-term leadership, organizational stability, and systems-level impact.



Community-Based Programs & Partnerships

The CWD works collaboratively with school districts, public health agencies, community-based organizations, and cultural networks to ensure that workforce investment directly benefits communities while creating sustainable pathways into behavioral health careers. Through these partnerships, the CWD extends workforce development beyond the classroom—supporting mental health literacy, culturally grounded services, youth career exposure, and multilingual access to care, while strengthening the future behavioral health workforce.

Together, these community-based partnerships reflect the CWD’s commitment to equity-driven workforce development that is accountable to community voice, responsive to local needs, and designed for long-term impact.

HAITIAN MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK

The Haitian Mental Health (HMH) Network is a community-rooted initiative that advances culturally and linguistically responsive mental health promotion, workforce development, and community wellbeing. Through multilingual workshops, youth and adult training, mentorship, and community education, the HMH Network supports mental health literacy while creating entry points into behavioral health and community health careers. The Network has become a trusted resource for Haitian families and a model for culturally grounded workforce engagement.

SCHOOL AND YOUTH FOCUSED PARTNERSHIPS

In collaboration with school districts and public health partners, the CWD supports initiatives that introduce youth and families to behavioral health careers while expanding access to culturally responsive support. Partnerships with Boston Public Health Commission programs and Dedham Public Schools have included after school workforce exposure, parent workshops, youth internships, and the development of school-based behavioral health supports. These efforts strengthen early workforce pathways while addressing immediate community needs.

COMMUNITY WELLNESS COLLABORATIONS

The CWD has partnered with public health agencies and philanthropic organizations to deliver community wellness programming focused on mental health education, trauma-informed support, and system navigation for families facing displacement, migration stress, and economic instability. Collaborations with funding partners such as Boston Children’s Hospital and the Health Resources & Services Administration have expanded access to language-accessible and community-informed services for children and families living in high-need settings.



COLLECTIVE COMMUNITY IMPACT

Across these partnerships,
the CWD:

- Strengthens access to culturally and linguistically responsive behavioral health services
- Builds trusted, community-rooted workforce pathways for youth and adults
- Expands career exposure and training opportunities in underserved communities
- Supports collaboration across education, health, and community systems



RESEARCH & POLICY

INFORMING SYSTEM CHANGE

The CWD pairs workforce training with action-oriented research to address the structural barriers that limit equity, retention, and access within behavioral health systems. This work translates lived experience and workforce data into practical insights that inform policy, funding strategies, and organizational practice.

Findings from this work are actively used by policymakers, funders, advocacy organizations, and system leaders to guide workforce reform efforts, strengthen retention strategies, and advance policies that support a more diverse, sustainable behavioral health workforce.

KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

- Workforce Retention Study examining turnover among underrepresented providers
- Behavioral Health Licensure Study identifying barriers and opportunities for equitable reform



LOOKING AHEAD

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

As behavioral health workforce shortages persist and community needs continue to grow, the Center for Workforce Development is focused on the future—building on proven models, deepening partnerships, and expanding collective impact.

We invite partners, funders, policymakers, and collaborators to join us in advancing this work—investing in a behavioral health workforce that is diverse, resilient, and prepared to meet the needs of communities today and into the future.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Looking ahead, the CWD is committed to:

- Scaling proven workforce pathways that expand access and reduce barriers to entry
- Expanding leadership development to strengthen organizational stability and retention
- Deepening community-based partnerships rooted in trust, equity, and shared accountability
- Advancing research and policy reform that informs systems-level change
- Strengthening multilingual and culturally responsive care pathways to meet evolving community needs

THE PATH FORWARD

LEADING WORKFORCE INNOVATION

The Center for Workforce Development has demonstrated that equitable workforce development works—when it is intentional, community-rooted, and collaborative. Since 2021, the CWD has translated this belief into action by building accessible career pathways, expanding clinical and leadership capacity, strengthening community partnerships, and advancing research that informs systems-level change.

At its core, the CWD operates as an innovation hub for behavioral health workforce development. By bringing together education, community expertise, service delivery, and policy-informed research, the CWD designs, tests, and scales workforce models that respond to real world needs. These efforts generate practical solutions to persistent workforce challenges—reducing barriers to entry, improving retention,

expanding access to care, and strengthening leadership within community-based systems.

The impact of this work extends beyond individual programs. It reflects a broader commitment to building a workforce that is diverse, resilient, and prepared to serve communities with the greatest needs. The outcomes highlighted in this report underscore what is possible when institutions, funders, policymakers, and community partners work together with shared purpose and accountability.

As behavioral health systems continue to evolve, the CWD remains committed to innovation, partnership, and equity—serving as a catalyst for workforce strategies that are not only effective, but sustainable. We look forward to continuing this work alongside partners who share a vision for a stronger, more inclusive behavioral health workforce and healthier communities for all.





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