

Executive Summary

The Opioid-Impacted Family Support Program, sponsored by the Community College of Baltimore County and funded by a \$2.1 million grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), is a targeted workforce development program responding to the opioid epidemic in central Maryland and the surrounding communities. Designed to expand service access for individuals and families impacted by substance use, the OIFSP is a workforce training program that provides accelerated training toward a workforce credential for entry-level clinical counselors, combining classroom and on-the-job training through co-operative work experience and an apprenticeship registered with the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council (MATC).

The objectives of this project include: incorporating experiential learning and on the job training, training through a registered apprenticeship program, equipping new paraprofessionals to enter the workforce, and serving 1130 families impacted by substance use.

The OIFSP seeks to address the significant workforce shortage in substance use disorders counselors and paraprofessionals by leveling barriers to entry into the workforce and accelerating the path to credentialing as a 'one stop shop' for those who are unemployed or underemployed in the behavioral health workforce. The ideal candidate for participation is experiencing unemployment or is underemployed in a related behavioral health paraprofessional role, with a strong desire to move through the ranks as a certified clinician in an 'earn while you learn' model.

This training program is invaluable in Maryland, to meet the state's designated workforce shortage. Behavioral health paraprofessionals trained through this program are uniquely poised to support the needs of the family and ameliorate the impact of trauma due to substance use in a state that lost over 2700 citizens to opiate overdose deaths in 2021.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: OPIOID-IMPACTED FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Partnerships and Collaborations :

The OIFPS is funded through a \$2.1 million grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Funding provides direct participant support through \$3000 in tuition benefits and up to \$12,500 in supplemental stipends for participants completing all phases of the program. Institutional in-kind contributions include administrative support, wraparound case management services, and sponsorship of the registered apprenticeship by the CCBC Apprenticeship Center, housed within our School of Continuing Education and Economic Development. As a result, this program receives collaborative support from many areas of the institution, but most notably, both the credit and continuing workforce education areas of the institution. By creating an early relationship between credit and non-credit partners for the participant, we encourage participants to return to CCBC for their next workforce training need, whether completion of a degree or continuing professional education.

The CCBC Apprenticeship Center houses both sponsorship and related instruction for about 10 occupations, mostly non-credit bearing instruction. As the sponsor for the OIFSP apprenticeship, the Apprenticeship Center supports program faculty in recruitment of participants, onboarding of partner employers, and monitoring completion of milestones and competencies by the employees on the job. Integral to the success and sustainability of this model is our partnership with employers in the community. Our 12 current employment partners represent the diversity of our area in the clients served, size of the agency, scope of services, and location within urban, suburban, and rural areas of central Maryland. Each agency is situated in a medically-underserved community as determined by the Department of Health and Human Services, and provides clinical services to individuals experiencing substance use.

The OIFSP is connected to the local community through the Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC) and Opioid Intervention Teams, both situated within our local jurisdictional government, and through our Program Advisory Board, comprised of employers and members of the college community. The most important contributor to our success, however, is our indefatigable team of faculty and staff who provide instruction, tutoring, case management, career counseling, and connection to college or external resources.

Economic Impact

At the end of our funding term, the OIFSP seeks to have entered 113 participants into the substance use disorders workforce, or to have guided underemployed participants into more responsible and higher-paying roles. Of those, at least 50% are targeted to carry out registered apprenticeships of at least one

year, with progressive wage increases quarterly. Those participants who complete all phases of the program benefit from over \$15,000 in monetary support throughout their progression as well.

Our partner employers, through participation as registered apprenticeship work sites, are eligible for tax credits, reimbursement for any educational support (such as tuition remission), and reimbursement for wages paid to registered apprentices. For our smaller agencies, this allows for the increase in service capacity prior to the apprentice's completion of the required workforce credential.

From a macro perspective, there is a critical health labor shortage in the greater Baltimore area, with credentialed substance use professionals representing a significant percentage of that shortage. Current labor statistics project in Maryland project that Behavioral Health Counselors will represent the most significant increase in demand amongst the related human services fields, with a projected increase of 32.49% by 2028. Of note, in both state and national occupational data, the most significant increase in salary between the high school diploma and Associate's degree amongst the human services profession also occurs in the field of substance use disorder counseling. In that, the OIFSP positions individual participants to meet a high-demand job market and experience the greatest wage growth potential amongst related occupational fields.

Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity

The Community College of Baltimore County is committed to addressing issues of equity and inclusivity for historically underrepresented individuals and groups. Specific to the OIFSP, we have a two-pronged approach to ensuring equity and inclusivity for our participants. First, we are committed to training our team in the best practices in ensuring equity in both higher education and our professional field. To that end, we have, as a team, engaged in significant professional development in the area of equity and inclusivity, including a 15-hour Racial Equity Facilitator training offered by Paul Gorski of the Equity Literacy Institute, and a number of additional best practice trainings. As individuals, several of us serve on our institutional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion task force or its subcommittees, as well as a linguistic diversity workgroup and other collegewide committees.

Additionally, we are intentional in our recruitment and retention strategies to reflect the diversity of the workforce with our participants. We participate in an annual occupational data review, related to Perkins grant funding, to identify the demographics of our local workforce, and target recruitment efforts to those areas that are underrepresented in our participant body and the workforce.

Moreover, our participants, as people experiencing unemployment and underemployment, and often people in recovery from substance use themselves, have not attended college previously because of barriers to access, whether actual or perceived. We are committed to addressing those barriers to

provide equitable access in a number of ways. In particular, as we launched our program during the height of the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020-21, several of our participants experienced housing and food insecurity, periods of unemployment, and complicated mental health and adjustment concerns. Our case manager worked tirelessly to identify and connect participants with resources within and outside of the institution to ensure that their basic needs for safety and stability were met, including access to technology for remote classes during the pandemic.

Program Results

To date, we have admitted 33 participants in two cohorts; all participants began on the job training immediately. Our first 12 participants earned a credit certificate after their first semester, and 11 of those participants earned a workforce credential from the Maryland Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists immediately thereafter. The original cohort participants are on track to earn a second credit certificate this term (May 2022), and most will earn their Associates degrees in 2023. Later cohorts of participants are on track to earn their workforce credential and institutional credit certificates later this year.

In May 2022, our first 22 participants will begin their registered apprenticeships, under contractual partnerships with 16 employers in our community. This exceeds our targeted matriculation rate into the apprenticeship by about 17%. Simultaneously, we are recruiting an additional cohort of approximately 20 new participants to begin in Summer 2022, with a target of onboarding about 12 new employer partners as well.

Most significantly, our 33 participants have served approximately 1100 individuals and families in clinical settings across central Maryland. The impact of this program on the lives of families in our community is immeasurable, but we acknowledge that by addressing the role of substance use on the family, our participants reduce the experience of trauma and interrupt the cycle of addiction. These factors have significant implications for quality of life for the individuals we serve and for the community at large.

Replication

Working with our local stakeholders and consultants from Abt Associates, a subcontractor of the Institute for American Apprenticeships (IAA), we are actively exploring replication in other states. To that end, the Project Director intends to make a number of presentations and professional conferences during Years 3 and 4 of our award, to share the benefits, challenges, and lessons learned from developing this unique model. We have been actively engaged with 50+ grantees from programs across the country in an active learning community to focus on how this model can be implemented within the unique structures set in place by state apprenticeship councils and credentialing bodies.