

# National Mental Health Workforce Acceleration Collaborative- Pre-Master's Fellowship Program

## Program Overview

### Need Statement

The U.S. mental health and substance use (MH/SU) treatment workforce is insufficient to meet increased client demand and higher acuity of need from contributing factors of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is only one mental health provider for every 350 individuals in the U.S. This shortage of providers has contributed to nearly 55% of adults and nearly 60% of youth with mental illness receiving no treatment.<sup>1</sup>

To further complicate matters, not all trained MH/SU treatment providers reach their fullest potential. Data suggests that only 57% of master's level graduates make it to licensure due to the cost associated with licensure, inadequate pay, burnout, and difficulty getting licensed in a new state.<sup>2</sup> In addition, according to a 2021 study by National Association of Colleges and Employers, more than two thirds of internships for field placements in state government and non-profit organizations were unpaid. This leads to inequities for master's students seeking to complete program requirements, as the study also found that most unpaid interns were wealthier and white.<sup>3</sup>

### Program Description

To address the MH/SU treatment workforce shortage and increase the number of diverse licensed clinicians serving clients, Kaiser Permanente, in partnership with the National Council for Mental Wellbeing (National Council), Resilient Georgia, Georgia Association of Community Service Boards, Metro State University – Denver, Colorado Health Institute, and the Colorado Behavioral Health Council have launched the **National Mental Health Workforce Acceleration Collaborative (NMHWAC)** Program.

The NMHWAC's long-term goals are to increase the number of qualified licensed mental health and substance use treatment clinicians, while increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in client-facing positions. This program launched in September 2023 in Colorado and Georgia and will run through September 2025.

In the Fall of 2024, the NMHWAC program will support internship placement sites in hosting current master's students ("Fellows") who are pursuing a career in mental health and substance use treatment. The program will support Fellows by providing: 1) Funding to finance a stipend for the graduate student intern and 2) Funding to help reduce internship supervision costs for the site.

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<sup>1</sup> Reinert, M, Fritze, D. & Nguyen, T. (October 2022). "The State of Mental Health in America 2023" Mental Health America, Alexandria VA

<sup>2</sup> McCrickard, R. (2023). "The Mental Health Therapist Shortage Starts at Graduation: How to Help the 57% that Never Attain Licensure" Motivo

<sup>3</sup>Harris, N. & Gecker J. (September 2022). "Are unpaid internships fair? Many students, colleges and lawmakers don't think so." Associated Press



## Fellowship Program Goals

1. Improve financial and educational support for students pursuing a master's degree in behavioral health, including clinical social work, mental health counseling, or marriage and family therapy.
2. Increase the number of master's degree students pursuing a career as licensed mental health and substance use treatment clinicians through providing targeted support that addresses early barriers master's level students encounter on their paths to clinical licensure.
3. Increase diversity (e.g., race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, language, and cultural) of students pursuing field placements at approved sites.
4. Increase the number of patients served by NMHWAC Fellows at approved placement sites.

## Key Program Partners



### The National Council for Mental Wellbeing (National Council)

- **Website:** The National Council is a membership organization that drives policy and social change on behalf of over 3,400 mental health and substance use treatment organizations and the more than 10 million children, adults, and families they serve. The National Council advocates for policies to ensure equitable access to high-quality services, builds the capacity of mental health and substance use treatment organizations, and promotes greater understanding of mental wellbeing as a core component of comprehensive health and health care.



### Resilient Georgia

- **Website:** Resilient Georgia leads a statewide coalition of trauma-informed organizations in Georgia that develops a closely aligned and trauma-informed public and private network working toward a united vision to create a birth through 26-year-old integrated behavioral health system. Advancing the workforce is a key strategic priority for Resilient Georgia over the next two years (see [2023-25 Strategic Map](#)).



### Metropolitan State University of Denver

- **Website:** MSU-Denver is a nationally recognized leader for social mobility, where students of all ages and backgrounds build a better, more equitable Colorado through innovative and transformative education. Founded in 1965, MSU-Denver's mission is to provide a high-quality, accessible, enriching education that prepares students for successful careers, postgraduate education and lifelong learning in a multicultural, global, and technological society. To fulfill its mission, our diverse University community engages the greater Denver population in scholarly inquiry, creative activity, and the application of knowledge.



## Fellowship Program Benefits

Fellows will receive: financial support through a monthly stipend, training in the field of MH/SU treatment, and technical assistance to support their career and educational growth. Approved internship placement sites will receive a benefit payment to help cover the cost of the Fellow's supervision.

### Awards

Fellows will receive a stipend in the form of a monthly payment for a 9–12-month fellowship (internship) through their approved site.

- Georgia: Up to 16 candidates total will be funded at multiple sites.

Georgia Unit Cost Per Fellowship Candidate	
Stipend	\$ 9,000.00
Cost for Supervision	\$ 2,475.00
Total	\$ 11,475.00

### Sites

Fellows will provide clinical services through approved MH/SU treatment sites. Eligible sites must be approved and monitored by the student's university and be one of the following:

- Academic medical institution
- Federally qualified health centers (FQHCs)
- Community health care clinics
- Other nonprofit mental health providers
- Health care systems (preference to non-profits)

Sites will be selected based on the following criteria:

- **Capacity for Launch:** Is the site prepared to fully participate in the program and can it commit to all program requirements?
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Capacity & Supports:** Is the site able to support Fellows from diverse backgrounds (e.g., race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, cultural, etc.)?
- **Supports for Candidates:** Does the site have support in place to assist with Fellow retention (e.g., tuition or mileage reimbursement, professional development, etc.)?
- **Shared Vision of Success:** Is the site invested in shaping and advancing the mental health and substance use treatment workforce?

### Activities

1. Monthly payments directly to sites to help support Fellows' stipends between August 2024-August 2025 (up to 12 months).
2. Funding to support Fellows' clinical supervision at approved sites through the duration of the program.
3. Training and technical assistance opportunities to sites and Fellows to support them in continuing along their paths to becoming licensed MH/SU treatment professionals.
4. Tracking of Fellows' progress, including assessing barriers and facilitators to clinical licensure that can lead to state-level advocacy and regulatory changes.



## Fellowship Program Recruitment

Selected NMHWAC academic partners will assist in recruiting students pursuing a master's degree in clinical social work, mental health counseling, or marriage and family therapy seeking to complete their final program year clinical internship placement. NMHWAC state co-chairs will determine final selections for 2024 Fellows.

**Academic partners** in Georgia will be identified based on the following factors. Potential academic partners must:

- Offer accredited master's degree programs in clinical social work, mental health counseling, or marriage and family therapy.
- Embrace a commitment to diversity of their programs in clinical social work, mental health counseling, or marriage and family therapy.
- Collaborate with eligible placement sites including federally qualified health centers, community health care clinics, and other non-profit mental health providers.
- Have the capacity to support and coach current students through placement/internship options.
- Demonstrate consistent monitoring of placement site ability to meet the professional and clinical needs of graduate students.

**Fellows** at approved universities that fit the above criteria will be identified through an application process based on the following criteria. Potential Fellows must:

- Be an actively enrolled student in good standing, in their final program year pursuing an accredited master's program in clinical social work, mental health counseling, or marriage and family therapy.
- Have an expressed interest in pursuing a career as a licensed mental health and/or substance use treatment clinician.
- Show a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in their future career.
- Demonstrate need for the fellowship in order to complete their graduate education.
- Maintain capacity to attend Fellowship training and cohort meetings developed by their respective NMHWAC state co-chairs, in partnership with the National Council.

## Seeking Academic Partners

Resilient Georgia is seeking partnerships with academic institutions across the state of Georgia for the 2024 Fellowship Cohort. Institutions must be accredited by one of the following organizations: CACREP, COAMFTE, or CSWE. **If your institution is interested in becoming an academic partner, please complete the [survey of interest](#) by March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024.** Initial academic partners will be selected in March 2024.

Once academic partners are selected, eligible students from those institutions will be encouraged to apply for 2024 Fellowship cohort online. Academic partners will ensure the opportunity is shared with eligible students and support the application process for those students.

## Questions?

Please email Dr. Andrea Meyer Stinson LMFT ([ameyerstinson@resilientga.org](mailto:ameyerstinson@resilientga.org)) and include "NMHWAC Pre-Master's Fellowship" in the subject line of the email.

