

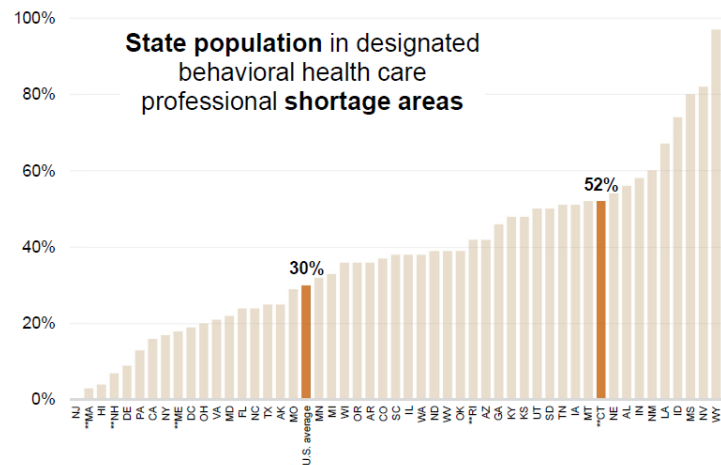
## Connecticut's Behavioral Health Workforce Shortage

### The Problem

The nationwide shortage of addiction and mental health professionals contributes to extended waitlists and limited access to needed mental health and addiction medications and treatment. There are over 123 million Americans living in designated Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) and nearly 6,000 additional practitioners are required to meet the current needs.<sup>1</sup> Projections show **that by 2025 the shortage will be astronomically worse**; six vital mental health provider types<sup>2</sup> will have shortages of approximately **250,510 FTEs**.<sup>3</sup> Every state is touched by the workforce shortage, but Connecticut is hit particularly hard.

### Spotlight on Connecticut's Behavioral Health Workforce

- Connecticut ranks in the top 10 of states with the **most** residents living in a HPSA. 1,870,191 people, or 52 percent of the state's population, resides in a designated shortage area. This is significantly higher than the U.S. average of 30% and the highest number within the New England region. Financial investment in workforce development is critical to restoring Connecticut as a leader in behavioral health treatment.
- Currently, Connecticut would need a **more than 50% increase** in the behavioral health workforce to meet the needs of children, families and underserved individuals.<sup>4</sup> Financial investment in the behavioral health workforce produces costs savings in ancillary social services by decreasing unnecessary hospitalizations and lengths of stay and reducing criminal justice costs by deferring individuals to community-based treatment.
- From 2010 to 2015, mental health-related visits to Connecticut's hospitals rose by 32%.<sup>5</sup> Hospitalization increases are a common side effect of community-based behavioral health workforce shortages as individuals in need are unable to access services in an outpatient setting. Hospitalizations are often more expensive than providing individuals the treatment they need within their community.



\*\*New England states

Source: Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA), HRSA Data Warehouse, 03/16/2018, and Census Bureau data (2017)

An infusion of funding for Connecticut's behavioral health system is needed to ensure recruitment and retention of qualified behavioral health to drive down avoidable hospitalization costs, reduce recidivism related to mental health incarcerations with justice-involved clients, address the substance use epidemic and increase access to timely, evidence-based care.

<sup>1</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation. (2017). Mental Health Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs). Retrieved from: <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/mental-health-care-health-professional-shortage-areas-hpsas/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>

<sup>2</sup> Roles include: psychiatrists; clinical, counseling, and school psychologists; substance abuse and behavioral disorder counselors; mental health and substance abuse social workers; mental health counselors; school counselors.

<sup>3</sup> Health Resources and Services Administration/National Center for Health Workforce Analysis; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration/Office of Policy, Planning, and Innovation. 2015. National Projections of Supply and Demand for Behavioral Health Practitioners: 2013-2025. Rockville, Maryland

<sup>4</sup> HRSA Data Warehouse. March 2018. Health Professional Shortage Areas.

<sup>5</sup> Connecticut Hospital Association. 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/connecticuts-mental-health-system-is-being-strained-by-shortage-of-state-psychiatric-beds-1471535575>