

# Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training for Professionals Serving the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and Rural Western NC: MSW Student / HRSA BHWET Scholar Transition to Employed Practice



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## INTRODUCTION

Since 2014, Western Carolina University (WCU) Department of Social Work has received a HRSA Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET) for Professionals grant.

## UNIVERSITY MISSION

The university focuses its undergraduate, master's and doctoral programs, educational outreach, research, creative, and cultural activities to sustain and improve individual lives and enhance economic and community development in Western Carolina and beyond.

## FEDERAL GRANT

U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services (DHHS) Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) Bureau of Health Workforce mission is to improve health and achieve health equity through access to quality services, a skilled health workforce and innovative programs.

## PROJECT GOAL

To improve the supply and distribution of the behavioral health workforce practicing team-based care in integrated settings on the Qualla Boundary (home of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians) and in high need / high demand areas of Western North Carolina with populations across the lifespan.

## PAST SUCCESS

The 2021-2025 BHWET grant builds upon the very successful 2014-2016 and 2017-2020 BHWET grant awards.

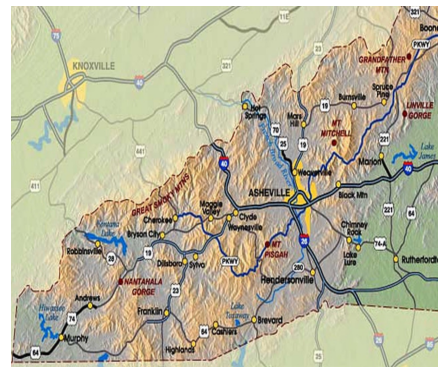
## COLLABORATORS

- Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI)
- Center for Native Health (CNH)
- Vaya Health
- Integrated healthcare partners across Southern Appalachia



## CATCHMENT AND POPULATION

Medically Underserved Communities (MUCs) and Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) in 12 rural counties and the Qualla Boundary with individuals with or at risk for mental health and substance use disorders or who are otherwise considered vulnerable.



## RESULTS

After recruitment and training of a diverse cohort of MSW students ("Scholars") interested in pursuing integrated care practice in the identified region, Scholars transition to frontline practice by seeking employment in the catchment area to which they committed upon their grant award.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Strategies that lead to alumni employed practice as strong and resilient professionals:

- Complete SOCW 530 *Integrated Healthcare* and online *Interprofessional Education* module which includes IPEC Core Competencies for Interprofessional Collaborative Practice, rural health, and Native and Appalachian culture. Core and elective courses include Addiction Studies, Native Health, Child Welfare, School Social Work, and others.
- Accomplish up to a 700-hour specialized internship in integrated care in MUCs / HPSAs.
- Complete specialized training on health and safety, evidence-based practices and tools.
- Engage in interprofessional education (IPE) opportunities with other disciplines.
- Enroll in an Integrated Care Learning Community.
- Participate in 10 seminars that include support for self-care and information about professional behavior and competency, licensure process, workforce needs, and local employment landscape.
- Finalize a professional resume
  - Provide an example of wording to reflect specialized education and training
  - Review by Center for Career & Professional Development, faculty, and project coordinator
  - Obtain and include software and NPI#
- Envision short- and long-term career goals and craft a professional development plan.
- Attend NASW-NC student webinars for career identity and connection with professional organization. NASW membership is encouraged.
- Use *Big Interview* software and attend employment-oriented workshops and career fairs.
- Project Coordinator provides clinical supervision to build community partner capacity, promotes availability of Scholars with employers, can match students with job openings, and tracks employment and licensure after graduation.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order for MSW students to develop a professional identity and enter the workforce as early career professionals who are ready to succeed, there needs to be:

- ❖ Education grounded in social work principles and practices
- ❖ Interprofessional education and training of students who can demonstrate skills working in highly collaborative teams providing integrated care in various settings with cultural humility
- ❖ Preparation for employment and career
- ❖ A high level of collaboration with community and regional partners to increase (a) knowledge, skills and abilities related to whole person and integrated care, and (b) employment working with vulnerable populations.



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