
Describing the Bachelor's-Level Behavioral Health Workforce Across the U.S.

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Background

Bachelor's-level behavioral health support roles are increasingly acknowledged for their potential to strengthen behavioral health systems, yet how states define, credential, and regulate these roles varies widely. This study characterized bachelor's-level behavioral health support roles across states through credentialing structures, education requirements, scope of practice/authorized services, and regulatory authority.

Methods

A 50-state comparative analysis was conducted using credentialing authority websites, state administrative codes, state Medicaid websites, and other government webpages. State-specific data were systematically abstracted between November 2024 and May 2025 and descriptively compared across states.

Key Findings

Twenty-nine states had at least one bachelor's-level behavioral health credential, with 50 roles meeting criteria for inclusion. Most states had a single credential ($n=19$; 66%), and nearly half ($n=21$; 42%) of identified roles offered alternative pathways to entry. Twenty licenses or certifications were identified across nine states, while 30 roles across 22 states were defined through administrative code or other state policy guidance. Education and practice hour requirements varied substantially across roles and states.

Discussion and Policy Implications

Considerable differences exist in titles, requirements, and scope of practice/authorized services across states. Shared core competencies, clearly articulated education pathways, consistent professional standards, and credential portability may strengthen the preparation and deployment of the bachelor's-level workforce.

Conclusions

Understanding the current landscape is a prerequisite to building the systems needed to train and deploy bachelor's-level workers in response to growing behavioral health demand. Increasing transparency in how roles are defined and what pathways exist to fill them is a shared foundation for states seeking to grow this workforce.

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