



Allegheny County  
Department of  
Human Services



COMMUNITY CARE  
Behavioral Health Organization



Jewish  
Healthcare  
Foundation

# Behavioral Health (BH) Fellows

## Fellow

## Program & Application Guide

For the most up-to-date information on the upcoming cohorts and deadlines for application, please visit:

[bhfellows.jhf.org/apply](https://bhfellows.jhf.org/apply)

For Questions: [bhfellows@jhf.org](mailto:bhfellows@jhf.org)

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## Program Information

The BH Fellows program is collaboratively administered by Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Community Care Behavioral Health, Jewish Healthcare Foundation, and Community Family Advocates.

The BH Fellows program was established to assist in the stabilization of the public behavioral health workforce in Allegheny County. This stabilization will be accomplished by increasing the recruitment and retention of direct-care staff in service areas that are experiencing the highest levels of vacancies. Recruitment and retention efforts will be aided by providing Fellows with the following program benefits:

- Student loan repayment funds
- Professional certification support
- Professional development and training in a cohort model
- Required minimum salaries by their employer

These benefits are in return for a commitment to work at the BH Fellow program employer in an eligible role for a minimum of two years. A listing of eligible roles is contained in a table at the end of this guide.

## Benefits Details

### Repayment Funds

- Awarded fund amounts may be up to \$25,000 for an earned bachelor's degree OR up to \$45,000 for an earned master's degree.
- The time in which the qualifying educational loans were incurred must coincide with the period in which the applicant was earning their degree.
- The degree does not need to be completed prior to applying to the program.
- All qualifying loans must have been incurred for a degree earned before the scheduled cohort retreat date.
- Fellows must remain in good standing with their employer, in an eligible role, for their full two-year term to receive any of the repayment funds.
- Fellows are not eligible to receive any repayment funds if they no longer have any outstanding qualifying educational loans because 100% of their loans have been repaid through another program.

### Qualifying Educational Loans

Qualifying loans may include actual costs paid for tuition and reasonable educational and living expenses incurred while attending school where the applicant obtained a bachelor's or master's degree for which they are requesting repayment funds.

## Types

1. Private
2. Commercial
3. Federal
4. Perkins
5. Consolidated
  - The original loan dates for the consolidated or refinanced loans must coincide with the period of the applicant's qualifying education for an earned bachelor's or master's degree.
  - The consolidated/refinanced loans must be from a government (federal, state, or local) or private commercial lender and only the qualifying educational loans of the applicant will be considered eligible.
  - The documents submitted must include account information showing the original loan approval and disbursement information.

## Non-Qualifying Loans

1. Loans obtained for training in vocational school.
2. Loans obtained from family members, lenders, or other entities that are not subject to federal or state examination and supervision as lenders.
3. Loans obtained for a Ph.D. or J.D.
4. Parent loans (and all loans made to parents).
5. Credit card debt or personal lines of credit.

## Information about Taxes

The January following when the student loan repayment funds are sent to the applicable loan servicer(s), Community Family Advocates will send each Fellow a tax form 1099-MISC for use with their tax filings.

Applicable federal, state, and local income tax laws change over time. As of February 3, 2025, student loan repayment funds offered through programs such as BH Fellows are listed as an exception to inclusion in the Participant's gross income for tax purposes.

A memo with the following information is provided to Fellows:

It has been determined that the student loan repayment funds that eligible BH Fellow Program participants receive are listed as an exception to inclusion in the Participant's gross income for federal tax purposes in the Department of the Treasury's Internal Revenue Service's Publication 525 (2022) – Taxable and Nontaxable Income; Reference section titled Canceled Debts – Exceptions, Student loan repayment assistance, pages 21-22.

Additionally, it is noted that "You can't deduct the interest you paid on a student loan to the extent payments were made through your participation in any of the above programs" pg. 22.

Regarding state income taxes, they may be exempt. Regarding local taxes, it is our experience that these codes often mirror the state tax laws and policies. The student loan repayment funds received may be exempt from being included in the Participant's gross income based on the following information:

“The rule that forgiven student loans that are not taxable income for federal purposes are also not taxable income for Pennsylvania state income tax purposes currently rests on an administrative interpretation reportedly endorsed by Governor Wolf and Governor Shapiro. That administrative interpretation and Pennsylvania Department of Revenue Personal Income Tax Bulletin 2009-02 could potentially be revised again by a future Governor,...”

Please be aware that when government administrations change, at any level of government, tax policies and laws are subject to change.

It is highly recommended that the Participant consults with a tax professional for advice regarding this exception and their annual tax filings.

### Professional Certification Support

- Available for Fellows who are not requesting student loan repayment funds.
- Fellows must have earned a high school diploma or equivalent before attending their cohort retreat.
- Support may include obtaining and/or maintaining certification.

### Professional Development and Training

- Fellows will come together once a month for the first nine months after the cohort retreat and every other month thereafter for professional development and team-building experiences to support their professional learning, relationships, and growth.
- Employers are reimbursed for Fellows’ time away to attend trainings. No PTO is to be used to attend trainings.

### Required Minimum Salary Standards

- Employers participating in the program must adhere to minimum salary standards.
- Minimum salaries are effective upon the Fellow’s hiring to an eligible role or acceptance into the program.

### Fellows’ Service Obligation

- **Contract** - Fellows must sign a legally binding contract agreeing to serve a required two-year service term as a full-time employee in an eligible role with a participating provider (employer).
- **Funds receipt** - BH Fellows program participants will not receive loan repayment until after a Fellow completes the two-year service obligation. Any Fellow who does not complete the contractual work commitment will not be eligible for any loan repayment amount.
- **Required attendance** - Fellows are required to attend scheduled cohort training and professional development sessions, which may be held either in-person or virtually.
- **Notification of change** - Fellows must keep their employer and the BH Fellows program advised of any changes of name, contact information, or employment status during the period of their BH Fellows service commitment.
- **Survey participation** - Fellows are expected to participate in BH Fellows’ planned program evaluation by completing surveys and other evaluation tools. All information gathered is anonymized and only used internally at Allegheny County Department of Human Services or Jewish Healthcare Foundation for program evaluation and improvement purposes.
- **Service credit** – No service credit will be given for employment prior to the effective date of

the BH Fellows loan repayment contract. The effective date of the contract for existing staff is the date it is signed by the County Manager. For those who are newly hired to a role, it is their start date.

- **Secure employment** - If a Fellow fails to accept full-time employment in a program-eligible role by the date of their cohort's scheduled retreat date, the Fellow may be moved to another cohort, once employment is secured.
- **Transfers** - Fellows may, under certain circumstances, transfer to another eligible role or program participating employer. Any transfer requests must be made in writing immediately to program administrators at [bhfellows@jhf.org](mailto:bhfellows@jhf.org) to obtain prior approval. Include the reason and the last day of employment in that specific eligible role. Only one transfer may be granted within the two-year term.
- **Work absences** – Employer approved leave is considered leave from the BH Fellows program. Any leave/absences totaling more than what is typically offered through FMLA in a service year may extend the service contract end date. The BH Fellows Program allows participants to be on leave from BH Fellows within the timeframes permitted by state and federal law; however, participants must adhere to the leave policies of their provider employer.
- **Maintain good standing** - BH Fellows participants must meet and maintain acceptable levels of performance in their employment through the required two-year service obligation. Each employer determines the acceptable level of employee performance.
- **Student loan forgiveness** - Participants whose loans are forgiven through any other program and who no longer have outstanding qualifying educational loans must immediately contact the BH Fellows program at [bhfellows@jhf.org](mailto:bhfellows@jhf.org) for further instructions.
- **Unemployment** - BH Fellows participants who resign or are terminated from their eligible role must contact the BH Fellows program immediately at [bhfellows@jhf.org](mailto:bhfellows@jhf.org). The BH Fellows program may provide the participant a certain period during which to obtain an offer and accept a position in an eligible role with another participating employer depending on the facts and circumstances relating to the resignation or termination. It is the participant's responsibility to obtain employment in an eligible role with a participating employer. Fellows who do not secure employment within the allotted timeframe or do not choose to continue in the program will have their contract terminated.

## Application Information

The BH Fellows program uses a holistic approach to review applications, allowing all the applicant's talents and experiences to be considered.

- The BH Fellows program uses a rolling application approach. For current cohort application due dates and start dates, please visit <https://bhfellows.jhf.org/apply>.
- Applicants are encouraged to setup an account to save their application materials.
- **Questions?** For more information, please email [bhfellows@jhf.org](mailto:bhfellows@jhf.org).
- Applicants are encouraged to review different service areas included in the program, along with their eligible roles, listed in the table at the end of this guide.

All information obtained in the application process is maintained within Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) for use by DHS or its contracted partners to monitor BH Fellows-related activities. Disclosure of the information sought in this application is voluntary. However, if not submitted, except for the replies to questions related to race, ethnicity, and gender, an application may be considered incomplete and therefore may not be considered for the BH Fellows program.

### Application Submissions

Applications require the following documents. Each document submitted must include the applicant's first and last name.

- **Unofficial Transcript** - Please provide for the highest level of school achieved. School transcripts must state the applicant's name, the name of the institution, dates of attendance, and courses taken. If a degree was obtained, the transcript must include the type of degree and the date it was conferred or the applicant must provide another appropriate document with this information (e.g., a copy of a diploma).
- **Resume/CV** - Applicants must submit a current resume, which documents all education, training, dates of all degrees conferred, and a complete employment history.
- **Loan Information and Documentation** - Information must be provided for each loan for which the applicant is seeking repayment funds. Review the types of loans that qualify and do not. They are listed on pages 3 -4 in this guide. Details of documents required are stated in the online application.
- **Recommendation Letter** - The applicant must arrange for one (1) letter of recommendation from an academic or professional reference to be submitted on their behalf. The recommender questionnaire which will be automatically sent to your selected recommender and will seek the recommender's responses to questions such as:
  - How long have you known the Applicant?
  - In your opinion, does this Applicant possess high standards of good moral character and fitness required to serve the behavioral health needs of vulnerable populations? Explain in detail.
  - Do you know of anything noteworthy that reflects favorably or unfavorably on the Applicant's reliability to meet and sustain the requirements of the BH Fellows program?

- **Required Essay Responses.** The applicant must provide typed responses to the essay questions listed in the online application.

## Application Review Criteria

The following criteria are considered when determining BH Fellow awardees:

- 1) **School Transcript (submit for highest level of school achieved).** Transcripts are reviewed as a part of the total application; GPAs under 2.0 may indicate the applicant is not ready for BH Fellows; transcripts are also considered to evaluate an applicant's status in achieving their degree.
- 2) **Recommendation letter.** Will be used to evaluate the applicant's character to serve the behavioral health needs of vulnerable populations, as well as their reliability to meet and sustain the requirements of the program.
- 3) **Response to essay questions.** Applicant must demonstrate a commitment to a career in behavioral healthcare; interest/motivation in providing care to underserved communities and vulnerable populations; and/or relevant work experience or activities (e.g., community service, research, and internships) that have prepared the applicant to work with underserved populations.
- 4) **Resume/CV.** Will be used to evaluate the applicant's professional and volunteer experience, and to note any educational experience, including certifications.
- 5) **Financial Need (relevant to applicants seeking BH Fellows loan repayment).** Among applicants seeking educational loan repayment, funding preference is given to qualified applicants with the greatest financial need defined as those qualified applicants whose debt-to-salary ratio.

## Award Notification Details

**Confirmation of Interest** – Applicants who are approved to participate in the program will be notified by email with a Confirmation of Interest letter. This email will ask the applicant to confirm their continued interest in participation, to confirm the pledged repayment fund amount, and contain other program information.

**BH Fellows Service Contract** – Approved applicants must sign their contracts immediately upon receipt. If a contract is not received within two weeks of receiving the Confirmation of Interest letter, applicants are encouraged to reach out to program administrators. Contracts must be signed before an applicant attends their scheduled cohort retreat.



## Program Participating Employers and Eligible Roles

**Program-eligible roles.** *Table 1* summarizes the behavioral health direct-care jobs that are eligible for BH Fellows to be employed. To receive service-credit toward the two-year service obligation, a Fellow must be employed by a Program-approved employer in one of the following roles:

*Table 1: Qualifying Service Areas, Eligible Staff Roles, Minimum Staff Qualifications*

Level of Care or Target Service Area	BH Fellows-Sponsoring Providers	Eligible Staff Roles
<b>Blended Service Coordination</b>	Human Services Administration Organization Pittsburgh Mercy Pressley Ridge Staunton Clinic Wesley Family Services Western Psychiatric Hospital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Service Coordinator</b> – bachelor’s degree in a human services related field with no experience – <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Registered Nurse – <i>or</i></li> <li>○ High School diploma plus 12 credits in human services related field and two years experience</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Service Coordinator</b> (Master’s degree) – any Master’s as long as candidate meets the bachelor’s requirements – <i>or</i> Master’s degree in Human Services related field</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Service Coordinator Supervisor</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bachelor’s degree with 5 years direct care experience, 2 of which include supervisory experience – <i>or</i> Master’s degree in related field with 3 years direct care experience</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Family Based Mental Health</b>	Pressley Ridge Western Psychiatric Hospital Southwood Psychiatric Hospital Family Links Wesley Family Services Allegheny Children’s Initiative Family Resources Every Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bachelor’s Level FBMH professional</b> – bachelor’s degree in education, psychology, sociology, anthropology, social work, or a degree in any field of human services</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Master’s Level Clinician</b> - master’s degree in psychiatry, psychology, education, rehabilitation, with 2 years relevant experience</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Supervisor</b> – Bachelor’s degree in related field with 3 years relevant experience</li> </ul>
<b>Crisis Services</b>	Western Psychiatric Hospital - resolve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Peer Services</b> – high school equivalency +willingness to share recovery journey</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Crisis Clinician Associate</b> - Bachelor’s Degree in related field with no experience</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Crisis Services Coordinator</b> – Bachelor’s degree in related field w/ 1 year of case management experience</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Clinician I</b> - Bachelor’s degree in psychology, counseling, or social work with 1-yr clinical exp – <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Master’s degree in related field with no experience</li> <li>○ Other fields of study may be considered with at least 12 credits of coursework in human services/relevant MH exp</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Crisis Services Coordinator</b> – bachelor’s degree in social work, psychology or counseling with 2 years MH experience (includes 1-yr of case management exp)</li> </ul>

<b>Child RTF (Short-term) – Diversion and Acute Stabilization</b>	Southwood Psychiatric Hospital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Clinician II</b> - Bachelor's degree in related field with 2 years MH direct care experience (1-yr in crisis) – <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Master's degree in related field with 1-yr MH care exp</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Clinician III</b> - Bachelor's degree in related field with 4 yrs crisis experience – <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Master's degree in related field and 3 yrs experience</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Clinical Supervisor</b> - Master's degree and 4-5 yrs experience, including supervisory experience</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Nurse</b></li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Master's level care staff</b> with one year work experience with children</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bachelor's level care staff</b> with one year work experience with children</li> </ul>
<b>Targeted Case Management – SUD</b>	Human Services Administration Organization Merakey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Milieu Staff</b></li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Case Manager</b> with bachelor's degree in human services related field</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Case Manager</b> with master's degree in human services related field</li> </ul>
<b>Integrated Dual Disorder Treatment</b>	Pittsburgh Mercy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Case Manager Supervisor</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Master's degree with 3 yrs relevant experience</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Bachelor's degree with 5-yr relevant experience, 2 of which include supervisory experience</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Registered Nurse</b></li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Program Manager</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Master's degree and 4 yrs relevant experience – <i>or</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Bachelor's degree in related field + 5 yrs relevant exp and cert in co-occurring disorders within 6 mo. of hiring</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Team Leader / Master's level clinician</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Master's degree in related field and 2-yr of co-occurring disorders experience and 2 yrs program administration experience</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Vocational Specialist / Clinician</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Bachelor's degree in related field and 3 yrs relevant experience – <i>or</i> – Master's degree and 1 year experience</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Peer Specialist</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o High school equivalency + willingness to share recovery journey</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Community Treatment Teams</b>	Pittsburgh Mercy Western Psychiatric Hospital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Registered Nurse</b></li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Program Manager/Clinician III</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Master's degree and 4 yrs relevant experience – <i>or</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Bachelor's degree in related field + 5 yrs relevant exp and cert in co-</li> </ul>

		occurring disorders within 6 mo. of hiring
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CTT Therapist/Clinician II</b></li> <li>• Master's degree and 1 yr relevant experience</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Case Manager/Clinician I or II</b></li> <li>• Bachelor's + 1 or Master's degree and 1–2 yrs relevant experience</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Team Leader / Program Coordinator</b></li> <li>• o Master's degree in related field and 2 – 5 yrs of co- occurring disorders experience and 2 - 3 yrs program administration experience/supervising</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Vocational/Employment/DD Specialist / Clinician</b></li> <li>o Bachelor's degree in related field and 3 – 5 yrs relevant</li> <li>• experience – or – Master's degree and 0-1 year experience</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Peer Specialist</b></li> <li>• o High school equivalency + willingness to share recovery journey</li> </ul>