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Gateways Hospital and Mental Health Center Secures \$2.6 Million in Grants to Help Solve California's Mental Health Workforce Shortage

Grants aim to provide workforce development and improve access to mental health in LA County

Los Angeles, CA (May 16, 2023) – [Gateways Hospital and Mental Health Center](#), located in Echo Park, is making a significant impact in the mental and behavioral health industry through ongoing focus and investment in developing tomorrow's mental healthcare professionals, emerging as a teaching hospital, championing a robust internship and workforce development program as well as investing in retaining existing talent. To support these efforts, Gateways has earned over \$2.6 million in grants for workforce development. The grants are intended to address the urgent need for mental health workers in Los Angeles County, who play a crucial role in improving the lives of some of the most vulnerable communities.

[According to a report from the California Department of Health Care Access and Information](#), people with behavioral health diagnoses made up one-third of all inpatient hospital admissions in 2020. However, the shortage of behavioral health staff members has led to long wait times for patients, with hospitals increasingly unprepared to respond to the growing demand. Filling job vacancies has been a major challenge for many providers, with mental health professionals leaving their jobs due to overwork and stress compounded by the pandemic, moving out of state due to the cost of living, or many retirements. A recent [UCSF study](#) found that 45% percent of psychiatrists and 37% of psychologists are over 60 years old and are likely to retire or reduce their hours within the next decade.

"The current need for mental health services is unprecedented in LA County and mental health service workers are in high demand," said Dr. Phil Wong, the Chief Executive Officer of Gateways Hospital & Mental Health Center. "Even if we build the in-patient bed capacity needed here in LA County, we cannot admit patients without trained professionals to provide services. The lack of therapists, social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists is alarming, and it is crucial that we take immediate steps to address this gap by investing in mental health workforce development to ensure that patients receive the care and support they require. "

While [Governor Newsom's May Revised Budget](#) restores \$50 million of much-needed funding for public health workforce training programs that were cut in his January proposal, funds are

also urgently needed to help bolster a shrinking private healthcare workforce, particularly in mental and behavioral health. To address the shortage of mental health workers, Gateways has secured a series of grants to support students in their nursing and internship programs, as well as a worker retention program. The grants include:

- \$1,168,125 from the Department of Health Care Access and Information under the Community-Based Organization Behavioral Health Workforce Grant Program to provide educational loan repayment assistance to behavioral health professionals in California.
- \$500,000 under the Mentored Internship Program (MIP) from the California Department of Health Services to enhance the professional development of diverse students through mentored internships, prioritizing organizations working in underserved and diverse communities. The grant has been extended for 21 months, running until January 1, 2024.
- \$288,500 under the Hospital and Skilled Nursing Facility COVID-19 Worker Retention Payments program to provide retention payments to stabilize and retain California's healthcare workforce.
- \$175,000 from West Coast University's Education Department to create a Clinical Educator/Professional Development position. This program aims to expand Gateways' training programs and streamline clinical site onboarding, providing training opportunities for Family/Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner student internships, Biofeedback, and Trauma-Informed Care training for psychology students.

"As a psychology student participating in Gateways Hospital and Mental Health Center's internship program, I am truly grateful for the invaluable opportunity to immerse myself in the realm of mental health care and witness firsthand the profound impact we can make in the lives of individuals grappling with mental and behavioral illnesses," said Presley Fettig, a doctoral practicum student, from the University of La Verne. "These hands-on hours equip me with critical exposure to the mental and behavioral health environment, setting me up to be successful in this specialized field."

This year, Gateways hosted 60 interns, 315 undergraduate Registered Nursing students, and 16 Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner students. The intern program includes undergraduate, graduate, and post-doctoral students from various institutions such as Pepperdine University, Cal State Long Beach, Cal State Northridge, California Baptist University, UCLA, Pacific Coast University, and many more.

"Mental and behavioral health is a challenging yet rewarding career path and we have a great need in LA County for trained and qualified professionals at every level", said Margaret Pfeiffer Vice President of Clinical Operations for West Coast University. "Our nursing students need first-hand experience as they prepare to enter the workforce and the time they spend with Gateways Hospital gives them a glimpse into the world of mental health care, an important step as they learn how to provide services for our most vulnerable communities."

Gateways Hospital and Mental Health Center is a non-profit organization located in Echo Park that has been serving the Greater Los Angeles area since 1953. Gateways offers an array of comprehensive mental and behavioral health services for adolescents, transitional-aged youth, and adults. For more information, visit gatewayshospital.org or call (323) 644-2000.