

WAFCA 2023-25 State Budget Request

Growing Our Workforce

WAFCA is a membership association comprised of for profit and nonprofit behavioral health and human services agencies. Our members provide services ranging from prevention to residential treatment, across the lifespan, and throughout the state. The depth and breadth of services delivered gives us a unique perspective - one that allows us to see where struggles have taken root and identify targeted solutions. ***It is from this vantage point that we recommend expanding coverage for mental health professionals in the 2023-25 Biennial Budget.***

Supporting Qualified Treatment Trainees and Peer Specialists

Expanding support and coverage for in-training therapists and certified peer specialists to meet the needs of children, adults, and families will promote job growth in the behavioral health sector.

Addressing the mental health and substance use treatment needs of Wisconsin requires an array of practitioners including psychiatrists, mental health therapists and peer specialists, among others. We need to widen the pool of supportive, billable professionals.



Increase funding for the QTT grant program to at least \$2.5 million dollars to expand the pool of clinicians providing essential services and keep professionals in Wisconsin.

Agencies that hire and supervise licensed master's level clinicians as qualified treatment trainees (QTTs) incur additional costs for supporting these practitioners. QTTs require enhanced supervision and training, while also serving a reduced caseload, leaving the agency to fund the balance of their salary.

Recognizing these costs, the legislature created the **QTT grant program** to support the next generation of masters level mental health therapists. Over the past three years the program has enabled agencies to employ hundreds of new practitioners targeting traditionally underserved populations and geographically diverse regions of the state. ([University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, 2022](#))



Advance timely access to care by including peer specialists as a basic Medicaid benefit and requiring all insurers to cover peer specialist services and QTTs.

Certified Peer Specialists are professionals who use their personal lived experience to provide support to others and demonstrate that recovery is possible. Several forms of support and assistance are provided to individuals connected to Wisconsin's community mental health programs, as well as those receiving services through inpatient and outpatient settings, hospitals, and jails. Currently, **Medicaid has limited coverage for peer specialists and private insurers generally do not cover these key contributors to the mental health treatment team.**

- **The pool of certified peer specialists continues to grow** and supporting these professionals with fair wages and benefits requires equitable levels of insurance reimbursement.
- Forty states cover peer specialists in their Medicaid programs and of those twenty report no limits on the services. Meanwhile **Wisconsin Medicaid currently limits reimbursement for peers** to CCS and select substance use treatment programs. (KFF, 2022)