NATIONAL COUNCIL for Mental Wellbeing®

Jobs Worth Having, Keeping, and Growing In: Building Alabama's Behavioral Health Workforce

Kelsey Brock, Ed.D., LPC-S
Alabama Council for Behavioral Health | November 5, 2026

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CCBHC-T Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic TRANSFORMATION

Get Connected

GETTING STARTED | MENTIMETER

Phones out. This session runs on your answers.

1 JOIN

Go to

menti.com

Enter the code on screen, or scan the QR code.

Add Mentimeter QR code and session code here

2 INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Name, role, and organization

One quick short answer.

EXAMPLE

Michael Jordan, LCSW, Birmingham CCBHC

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Meet Your Speaker



Kelsey Brock, Ed.D., LPC-S

Senior Advisor, Workforce

National Council for Mental Wellbeing

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Agenda

SESSION ROADMAP | 90 MINUTES

12 MIN	**Welcome and Why**	Who's in the room, a story, objectives, and a warm-up	**MENTIMETER**
21 MIN	**Alabama's Workforce Story**	State data, the room vs. the nation, and what hasn't changed since 2007	**MENTIMETER**
12 MIN	**Jobs Worth Having**	Would a good clinician choose this job?	**REFLECTION**
20 MIN	**Jobs Worth Keeping**	Would they stay through the hard years?	**1-2-4-ALL**
13 MIN	**Jobs Worth Growing In**	Can they see a future here?	**MENTIMETER**
12 MIN	**Bringing It Home**	Your toolkit, a 60-second thank you, and closing	**PAIR SHARE**

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- **Identify** three team practices that improve recruitment and retention.
- **Describe** the value, growth, and career paths of this work to staff and candidates.
- **Interpret** workforce data to set your team's priorities.
- **Develop** supervision, well-being, and career strategies that sustain quality care.

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WHY THIS WORK

Think of a person who made you stay in this work.

Deep breath. Hold them in your mind. We'll revisit this later.

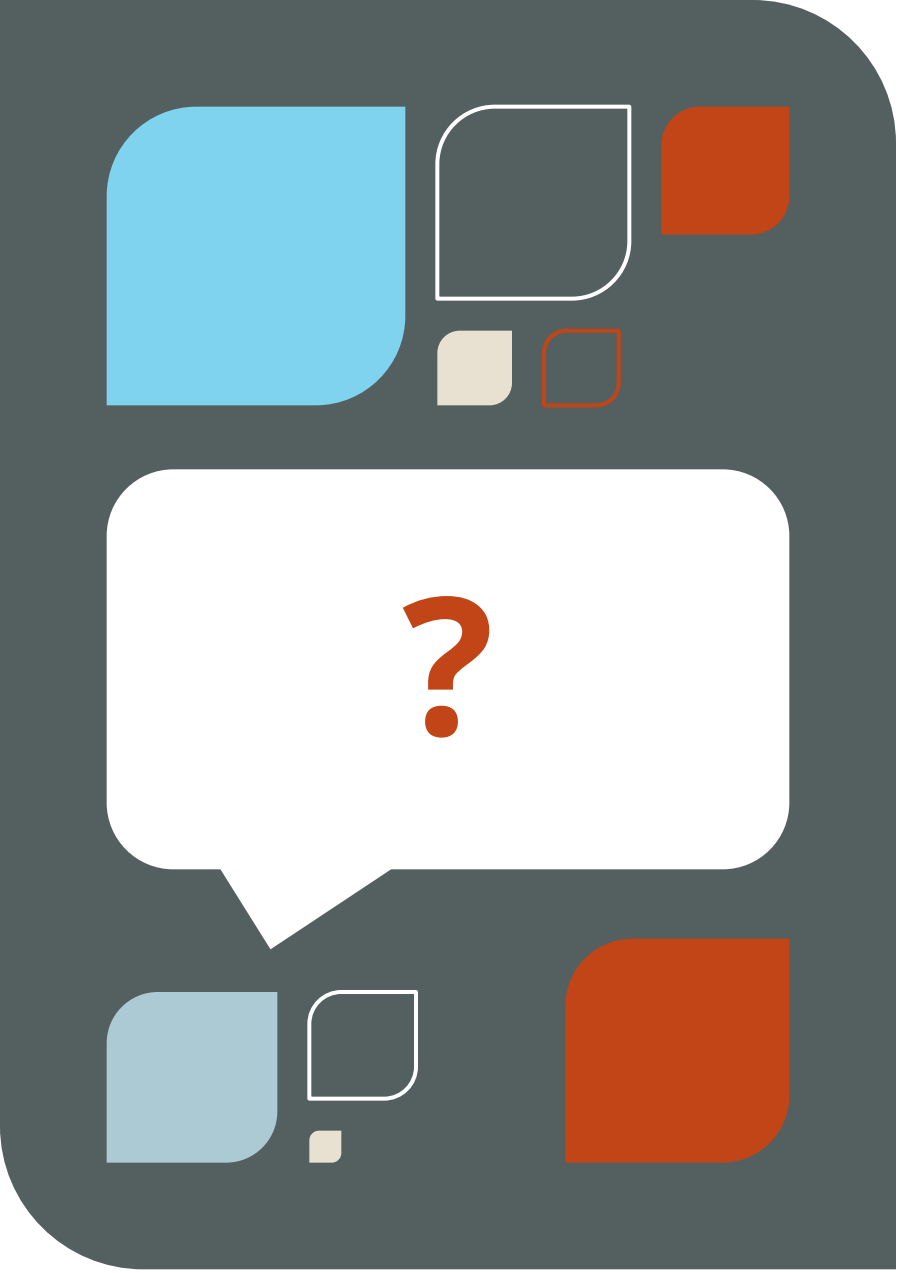
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Alabama's Workforce Story

The numbers are hard. The people behind them are why we're here.

SETTING THE STAGE

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MENTIMETER WORD CLOUD

In three words, describe working in behavioral health in Alabama today.

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Hard Work Worth Doing

GETTING STARTED | WHY WE'RE HERE

This work is hard. It is also some of the most important work in Alabama.

THE HARD TRUTH

- Teams are stretched thin, and caseloads keep growing
- Pay and paperwork haven't kept pace with the work or the industry at large
- Good people are stepping away

THE BIGGER TRUTH

- People still choose this work because it matters
- Alabama is building: CCBHCs, crisis centers, and school partnerships
- Supervisors and managers shape whether people stay

***You* are the retention strategy. We *all* are, *together*.**

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Alabama's Workforce at a Glance

ALABAMA'S WORKFORCE STORY | AT A GLANCE

Alabama's graduates aren't reaching community care.

WORKFORCE TODAY	**740 to 1** residents per provider, the highest ratio in the nation (U.S.: 320 to 1)	**28%** of mental health need met in Alabama's 67 shortage areas	
PIPELINE PER YEAR	**About 1,265** counseling and social work graduates a year	**At least 1,125** projected openings a year through 2032	**Yet +58%** rise in community provider vacancies, 2020 to 2023
NEED AHEAD	**232,000** Alabamians served by ADMH in FY25	**+18%** more 988 calls in one year	

(Alabama Commission on Higher Education, 2024; Alabama Department of Mental Health, 2026; Alabama Department of Workforce, 2025; Holmes, 2023; KFF, 2025; Mental Health America, 2025)

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Where Alabama Stands

ALABAMA'S WORKFORCE STORY | MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS PER 100,000 RESIDENTS

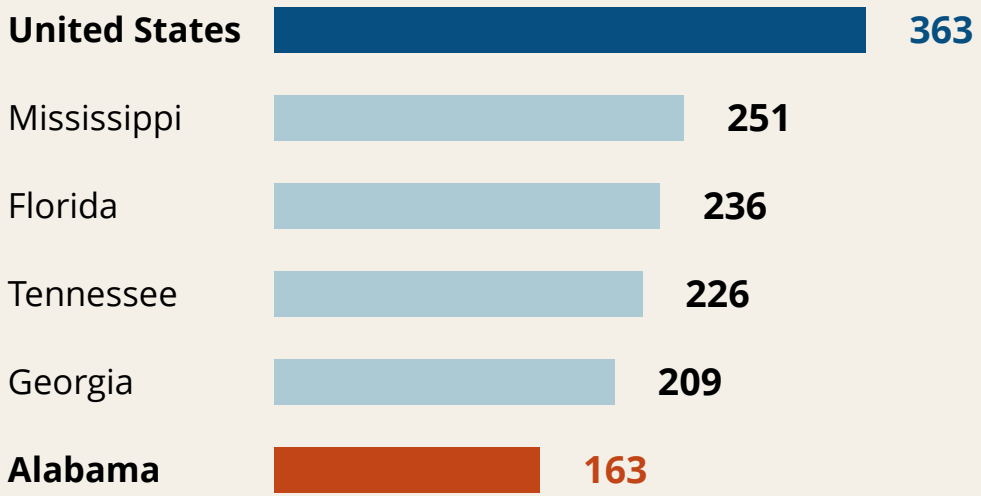
Alabama ranks last in the nation for mental health providers.

ALABAMA RANKS

50th

of 50 states for mental health providers per resident

PROVIDERS PER 100,000 RESIDENTS



45%
of the U.S. average

71%
of our neighbors' average

~10,000
more providers to reach the U.S. average

(United Health Foundation, 2025)

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What Alabama Is Getting Right

ALABAMA'S WORKFORCE STORY | BUILDING ON STRENGTH

Alabama has real momentum, especially in schools and crisis care.

SCHOOLS
122
school systems partner with community mental health centers

SCHOOLS
Every district
is called to have a school mental health coordinator (2022 law)

CRISIS LINE
90.9%
of 988 calls answered in state, above the 80% goal

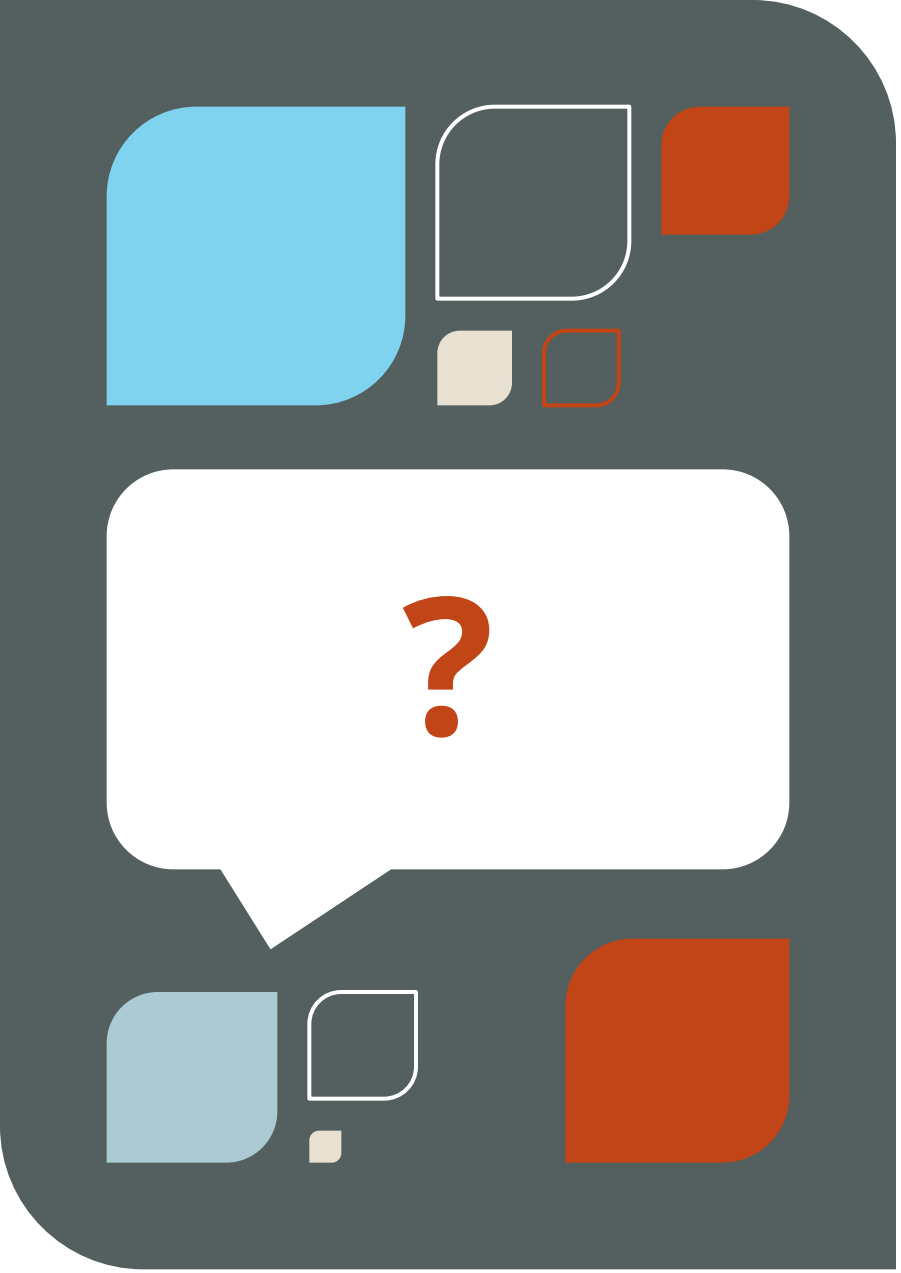
CRISIS CARE
485
ER visits diverted by Dothan's new crisis center

CCBHCs
4
certified community behavioral health clinics, two of them new since late 2025

ACCESS
7th
in the nation for lowest unmet treatment need

(Alabama Department of Mental Health, n.d.-b, 2026; LegiScan, 2022; Mental Health America, 2025; Wooten, 2026)

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MENTIMETER | THE ROOM VS. THE NATION

Have workforce shortages ever led you to consider other employment?

- Yes
- No

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The Room vs. the Nation

Have workforce shortages led you to consider other employment?

THE NATION

48%

Answered Yes, I have considered other employment

(National Council for Mental Wellbeing, 2023)

THE ROOM

Look back at our live Mentimeter results.

If our number is lower, what is protecting us? If it is higher, what is wearing us down?

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Why People Step Away

People come to this work for purpose. Here's what makes it harder to stay.

STAFF STRAIN	**TURNOVER** **25 to 60%** annual turnover in community behavioral health	**BURNOUT** **93%** of behavioral health workers report burnout	**INTENT TO STAY** **42%** of clinicians in shortage areas expect to stay 5+ years
THE JOB	**PAPERWORK** **1 in 3** spend most of their time on paperwork	**PAY** **About $45,000** average first-year counselor pay	**RATES** **82%** of psychologists who left insurance panels cite low rates

Each of these is something teams can influence together.

(American Psychological Association, 2024; Fukui et al., 2025; National Council for Mental Wellbeing, 2023; Pathman et al., 2025; PayScale, 2026)

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We've Been Here Before

ALABAMA'S WORKFORCE STORY | THEN AND NOW

Almost 20 years ago, a national plan named the same reasons people leave.

	ALMOST 20 YEARS AGO	TODAY
TURNOVER	50% of frontline staff and directors at substance use agencies left in one year	25 to 60% annual turnover in community behavioral health
CAREER LADDERS	Low pay and limited career ladders	1 in 4 clinicians see a path to a new role inside their organization
WORKLOAD	Heavy workloads and rising caseloads	65% report larger caseloads since COVID-19
SUPERVISION	An "erosion of supervision"	Good administration is the strongest predictor of staying
ACCESS	Half of U.S. counties had no mental health professional	137 million Americans live in a mental health shortage area

The pressures haven't changed. The ways we can address them *have*.

(Abrams et al., 2022; Annapolis Coalition on the Behavioral Health Workforce, 2007; Fukui et al., 2025; Health Resources and Services Administration, 2025; National Council for Mental Wellbeing, 2023; Pathman et al., 2025)

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The Workforce Journey

ALABAMA'S WORKFORCE STORY | WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

Every exit happens somewhere on the journey. So does every save.

01 HAVING
Bringing people in

WHERE WE LOSE PEOPLE
Other industries offer higher starting pay, clearer schedules, and no licensure costs.

WHERE WE STEP IN
Design the role, tell the story of the work, and onboard with clarity.

02 KEEPING
Supporting them once they're in

WHERE WE LOSE PEOPLE
Burnout, paperwork, and growing caseloads wear people down.

WHERE WE STEP IN
Protect supervision and right-size caseloads. Good administration is the strongest reason clinicians stay.

03 GROWING IN
Helping them advance

WHERE WE LOSE PEOPLE
No visible path forward, and licensure feels out of reach.

WHERE WE STEP IN
Map career paths and support licensure, with or without a move into supervision.

WHAT WALKS OUT THE DOOR **The client relationship, continuity of care, local know-how, and team capacity.**

(Johnson-Kwochka et al., 2020; Pathman et al., 2025)

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Jobs Worth Having

Would a good clinician choose this job?

HAVING | KEEPING | GROWING IN

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Why the First Year Matters

PILLAR 01 | JOBS WORTH HAVING

The journey breaks first in year one.

NEW HIRES

29.5%

of new hires leave within their first year

ALL TURNOVER

35.6%

of all turnover happens in year one

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Top 3

nursing specialties for turnover, with emergency and telemetry

LEADERSHIP

56%

higher odds of staying 5+ years with good administration

Every first-year exit restarts recruiting, onboarding, and a client's relationship. Getting year one right is the cheapest retention there is.

(NSI Nursing Solutions, 2026; Pathman et al., 2025)

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Hiring by Design

PILLAR 01 | JOBS WORTH HAVING | WHAT SUPERVISORS CONTROL

Hire for the real job and show candidates what it is.

01
Write the posting around what matters: supervision, schedule, and growth path, not just duties

02
Show the real job: a realistic preview or shadow shift, ideally face to face

03
Hire with the team: bring a future teammate into the interview or let them edit the job description

04
Be clear from day one: caseload, documentation load, and licensure support, in writing

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Telling the Story of the Work

PILLAR 01 | JOBS WORTH HAVING

Recruitment works when everyone can say why the work is worth it.

CURRENT STAFF

Name the growth already happening: licensure, new skills, promotions.

PROSPECTIVE STAFF

Lead with purpose, flexibility, quality supervision, and a visible path to advance.

RECRUITMENT PARTNERS

Equip recruiters, schools, and workforce boards with role profiles and career maps.

SELF-REFLECTION | 60 SECONDS

Finish the sentence: "Someone should take a job on my team because _____."

Write it down. Your answer belongs at the top of your next job posting.

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Tap Into What Alabama Is Already Building

PILLAR 01 | JOBS WORTH HAVING

Alabama is already building pathways from classroom to community.

JACKSONVILLE STATE

48 MSW students

up to $25,000 each, placed across 26 Alabama counties

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

$25,000 stipends

for BSW and MSW students in child and youth placements

ADMH PEER PROGRAMS

Lived experience

peer credentials that lead to provider jobs

WHERE YOU COME IN

Host field placements, offer paid practicums, and hire your interns. The pipeline only works if it ends in a job worth having.

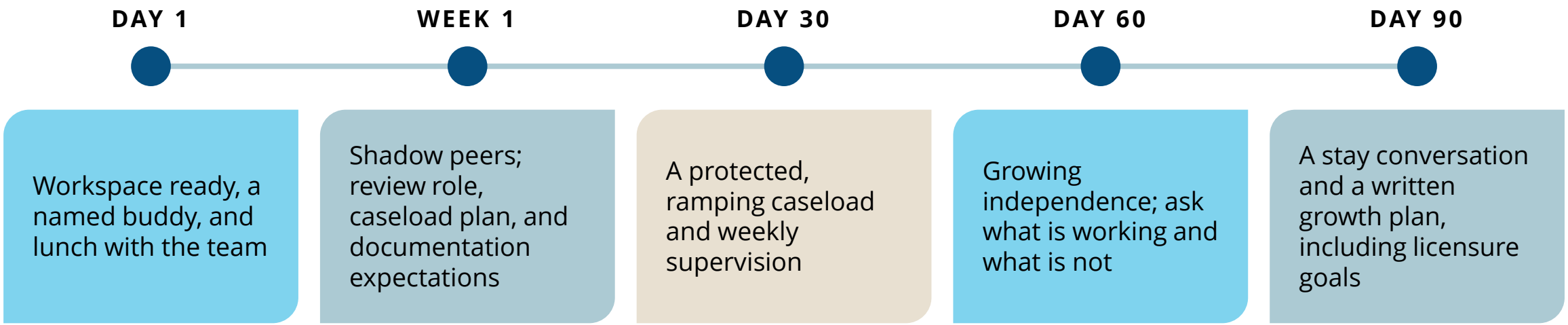
(Alabama Department of Mental Health, n.d.-a; Jacksonville State University, 2025; University of Alabama School of Social Work, 2026)

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The First 90 Days

PILLAR 01 | JOBS WORTH HAVING

Onboarding is where a new hire decides whether this job is worth keeping.



ROLE CLARITY FROM DAY ONE **Who does what on the care team, and where to go for help.**

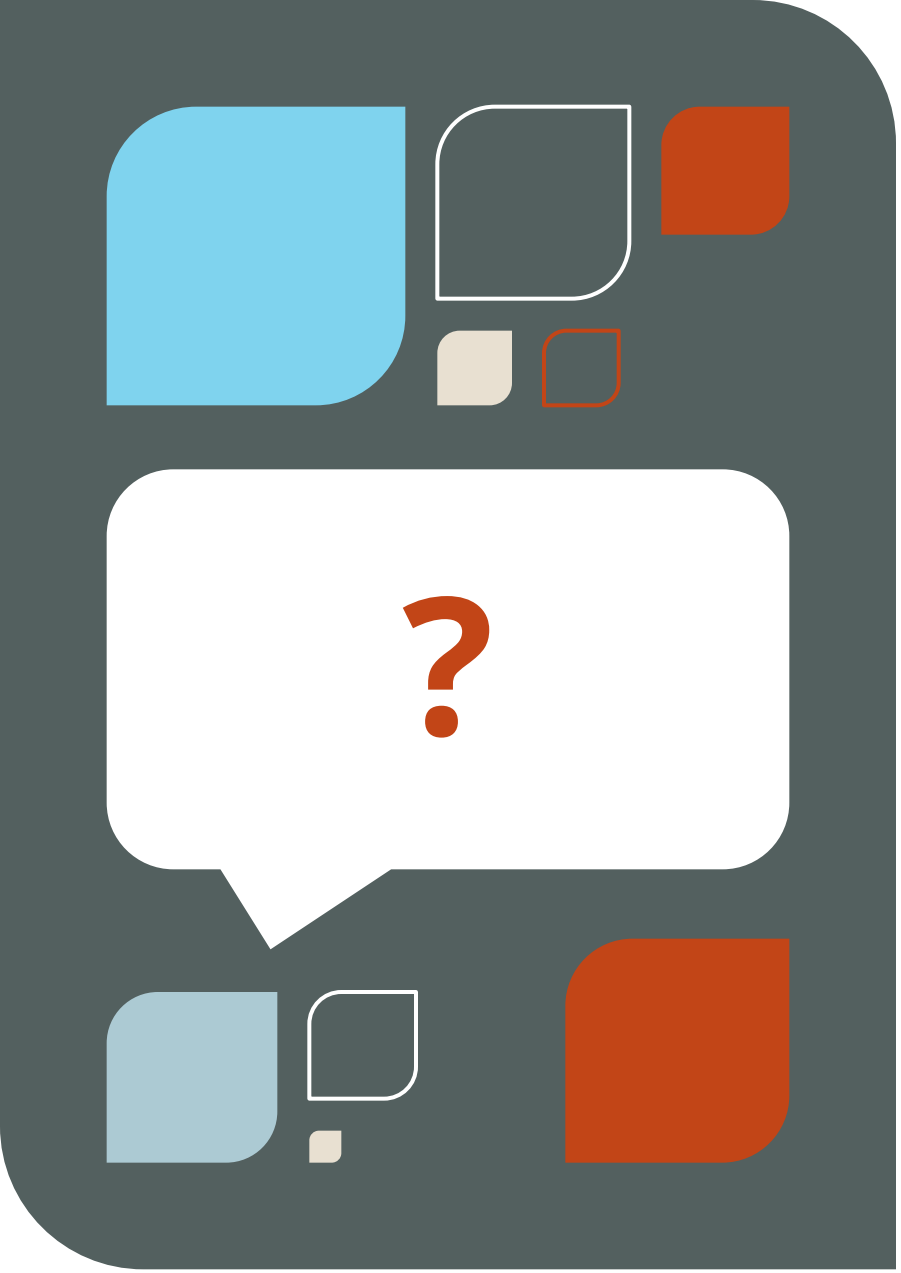
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Jobs Worth Keeping

Would they stay through the hard years?

HAVING | KEEPING | GROWING IN

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MENTIMETER | THE ROOM VS. THE NATION

How often are frontline staff on your team involved in decisions that change their day-to-day?

- Regularly
- Sometimes
- Not at all

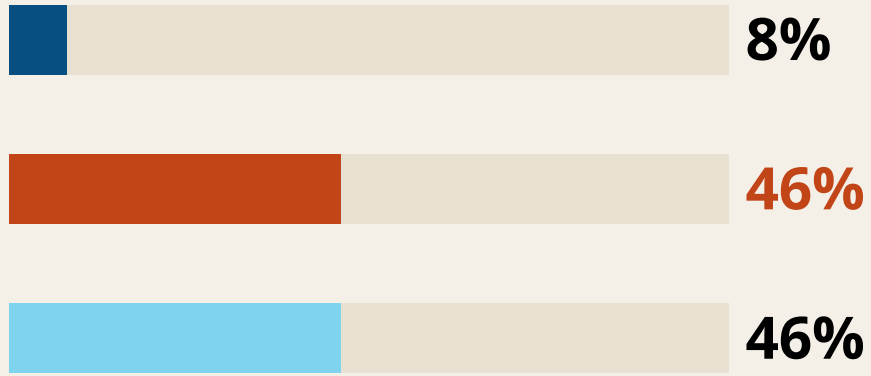
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The Room vs. the Nation

PILLAR 02 | JOBS WORTH KEEPING | THE ROOM VS. THE NATION

How often are frontline staff involved in decisions that change their day?

THE NATION



THE ROOM

Look back at our live Mentimeter results.

Nine in ten clinicians say this matters. What would “regularly” look like on your team?

(Abrams et al., 2022)

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Caseloads and Scheduling

PILLAR 02 | JOBS WORTH KEEPING

Burnout prevention starts in the schedule.

Are caseloads set by acuity and role and reviewed as a team, or inherited from whoever left last?

Does the schedule protect time for documentation, supervision, and recovery after high-intensity sessions?

Do clinicians have control over their hours, or options for flexibility across a hybrid environment?

Digital tools can lighten the load.
M7, AI-assisted documentation, and the Provider Resilience app give time back to care.

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Supervision That Reaches the Team

PILLAR 02 | JOBS WORTH KEEPING

Can your supervisor actually reach you?

01

PROTECTED TIME

Is clinical supervision protected, consistent, and focused on growth, or squeezed in between crises and paperwork?

02

SUPPORTING SUPERVISORS

How are supervisors compensated, and is supervision built into their daily role, or left to personal time?

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Team Culture and Connection

PILLAR 02 | JOBS WORTH KEEPING

People stay for people. Trust and belonging predict staying more than pay.

TEAMWORK

1.53x

more likely to leave when teamwork is rated low

ENGAGEMENT

1.7x

more likely to leave when disengaged

TRUST

23%

of frontline clinicians trust leaders to do right by them

INVOLVEMENT

9 in 10

frontline clinicians say being involved in decisions matters

TRY THIS WITH YOUR TEAM

Recognize specific work out loud, bring staff into decisions that change their day, pair every new hire with a peer, and protect time to connect as a team.

(Abrams et al., 2022; Press Ganey, 2025)

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The Stay Interview

PILLAR 02 | JOBS WORTH KEEPING | A TOOL FOR MONDAY

Don’t wait for the exit interview to learn why people stay.

- What do you look forward to each day when you commute to work?
- What are you learning here, and what do you want to learn?
- Why do you stay here?
- When is the last time you thought about leaving us, and what prompted it?
- What can I do to make your job better for you?

TRY IT THIS MONTH

Ask one question in your next supervision.

Listen first. Follow up within two weeks on what you can change.

(Finnegan, 2023)

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1-2-4-All: Jobs Worth Keeping

PILLAR 02 | JOBS WORTH KEEPING | TABLE ACTIVITY

What is one team-level practice that would make your team's jobs more worth keeping?

1

1 MINUTE

Reflect silently and jot down your ideas

2

2 MINUTES

Pair up and build on each other's ideas

4

3 MINUTES

Join another pair; notice what is similar and different

ALL

2.5 MINUTES

Each group shares their short answer on Mentimeter

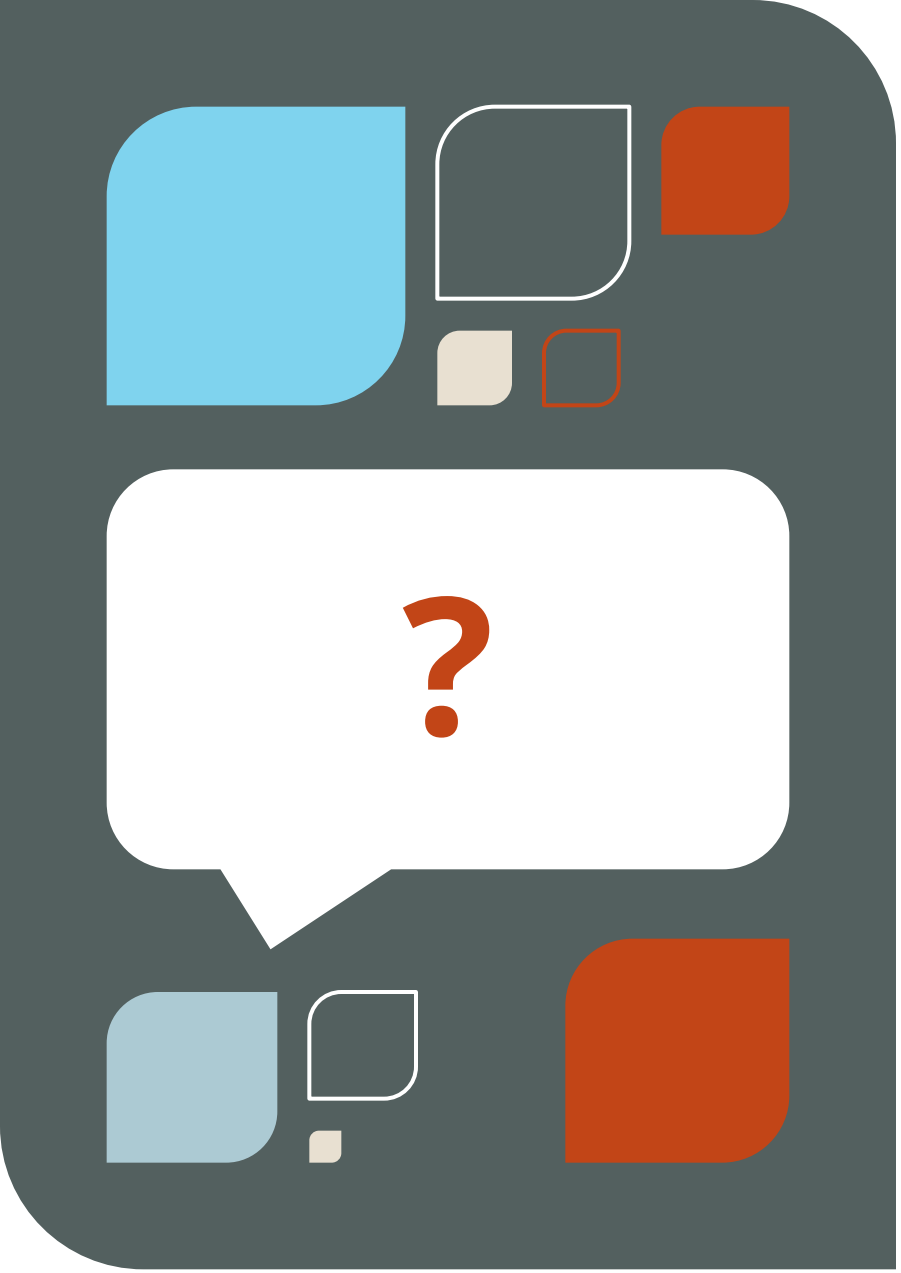
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Jobs Worth Growing In

Can they see a future here?

HAVING | KEEPING | GROWING IN

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MENTIMETER | THE ROOM VS. THE NATION

If someone on your team wanted a new role inside your organization, could they get one?

- Available
- Possible, but difficult
- Not possible

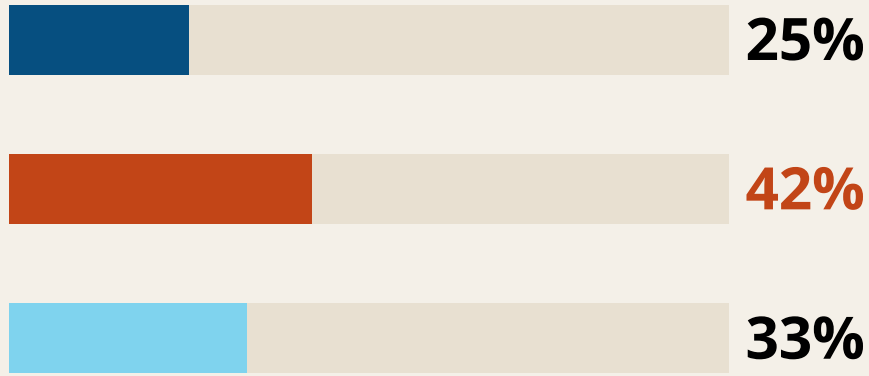
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The Room vs. the Nation

PILLAR 03 | JOBS WORTH GROWING IN | THE ROOM VS. THE NATION

Could someone on your team move into a new role inside your organization?

THE NATION



THE ROOM

Look back at our live Mentimeter results.

If growth is hard to see inside, where do people go to find it?

(Abrams et al., 2022)

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Career Pathways for Entry-Level Professionals

PILLAR 03 | JOBS WORTH GROWING IN

Growing in doesn't always mean becoming a supervisor.

Some staff want to lead from within, practicing at the top of their scope. Others want the credentialed track. Both are real advancement, and they don't have to be the same path.

LEADING FROM WITHIN

Entry-level (Community Health Worker or peer support) → **Practicing at the top of scope** → **Leading from within (mentor, team lead)**

LICENSED TRACK

Entry-level (CHW or peer support) → **Apprenticeship or grow-your-own** → **Credentialed clinical role**

(Maryland General Assembly, 2023)

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Licensure Support in Practice

PILLAR 03 | JOBS WORTH GROWING IN

Structured licensure support works at scale. Here is what it looks like.

KAISER PERMANENTE ACCELERATOR

930+

candidates supported toward licensure in 9 markets; goal of 1,000 by 2028

CCBHC-T ACCELERATOR

923

candidates and 77 employment sites in Illinois, Kansas, and Michigan

WHAT CANDIDATES GET

$8,500 to $10,000

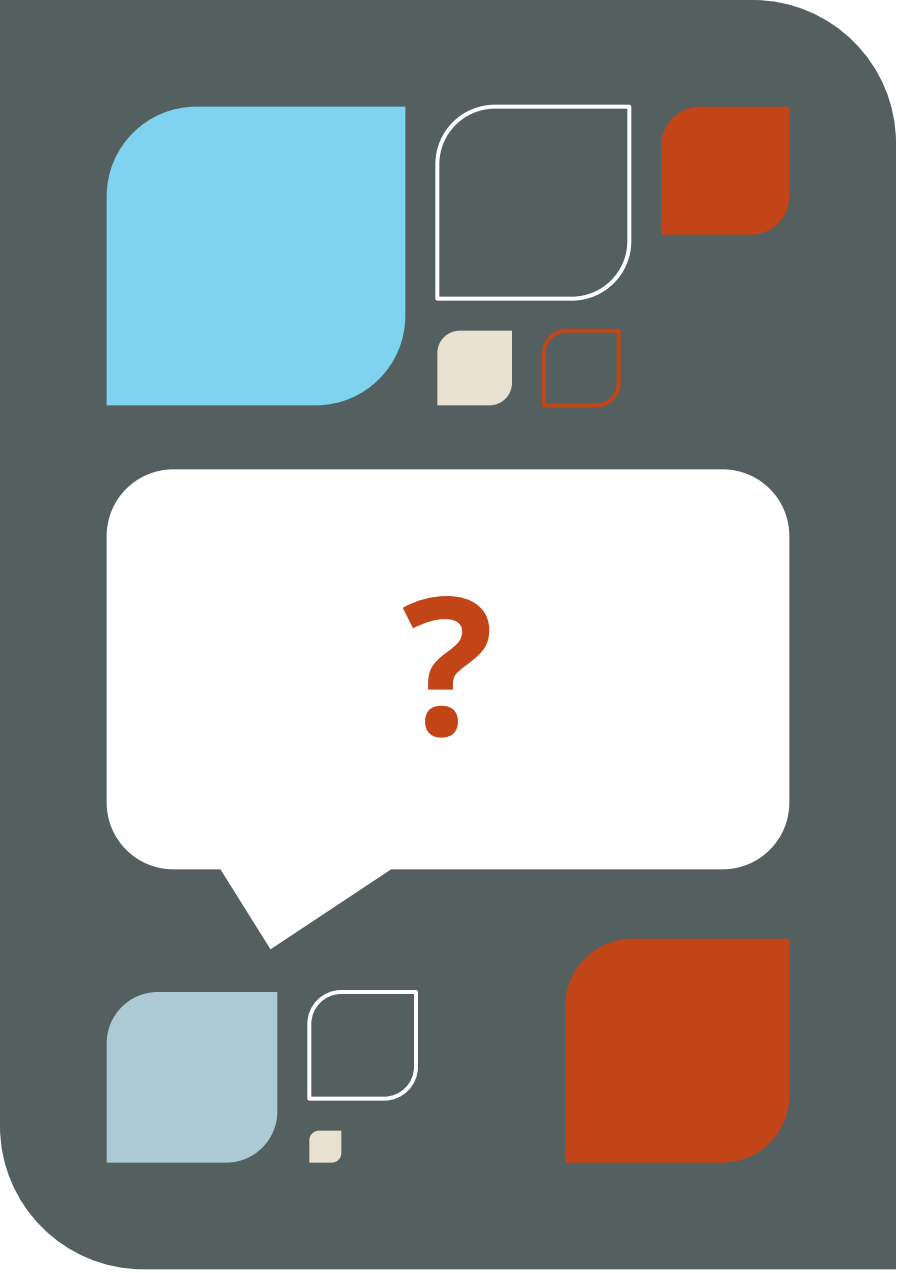
in milestone incentives, plus exam prep, supervision support, and peer mentoring

WHAT'S NEXT

A second CCBHC-T recruitment period opens in fall 2026, with a shared core curriculum across accelerators. Start today with SAMHSA's Career Navigator and PSLF.

(National Council for Mental Wellbeing, 2026a, 2026b, 2026c; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2023)

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MENTIMETER | THE ROOM VS. THE NATION

Can provider organizations meet the demand for care without public policy changes?

- Yes
- No, it will take policy change

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The Room vs. the Nation

PILLAR 03 | JOBS WORTH GROWING IN | THE ROOM VS. THE NATION

Can provider organizations meet demand without public policy changes?

THE NATION

83%

said: No, it will take policy change

(National Council for Mental Wellbeing, 2023)

THE ROOM

Look back at our live Mentimeter results.

Policy matters. As a CCBHC state, Alabama clinics have a shared vehicle to advocate together.

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Lessons from Other States

PILLAR 03 | JOBS WORTH GROWING IN

States already invest in the workforce. CCBHC helps them act together.

NEBRASKA
The Behavioral Health Education Center received $25.5M in federal relief funding to address its workforce shortage.

MARYLAND
House Bill 418 created a Behavioral Health Workforce Investment Fund for education, training, and placement.

OHIO
An $18M Behavioral Health Scholarship and Internship program launched in August 2026.

CONNECTICUT
CT Health Horizons offers tuition assistance to grow the health and behavioral health pipeline.

WHY CCBHC MATTERS HERE
30 states share one CCBHC model: common standards, shared data, and a vehicle for joint advocacy across clinics and across states.

(Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska, 2022; Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, n.d.; Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, 2022; Maryland General Assembly, 2023; Ohio Department of Behavioral Health, 2026)

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Key Takeaways

BRINGING IT HOME | THREE THINGS TO CARRY BACK

Jobs worth having, keeping, and growing in.

HAVING

Year one decides. Hire for the real job, and tell its story.

KEEPING

People stay for people. Protect supervision, schedules, and belonging.

GROWING IN

Make growth visible. If people can't see a path, they find one elsewhere.

Jobs worth having, keeping, and growing in are built one team at a time. Start with yours on Monday.

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Your Monday Morning Toolkit

BRINGING IT HOME | PILOT ONE TOOL THIS QUARTER

Three tools, one for each pillar. All three are in your handout.

HAVING

The First 90 Days Plan

Use it with your next new hire, from day one to the day 90 stay conversation.

KEEPING

The Stay Interview

Ask one question in each supervision this month, and follow up.

GROWING IN

The One-Page Career Map

Map two paths for one entry-level role, and share it with the team.

TURN TO A NEIGHBOR | 3 MINUTES

Which tool will you pilot, with which team, and what is one barrier?

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BRINGING IT BACK | MENTIMETER

What did they give you?

Think of the person who made you stay. Name it in one word.

NAME IT | THANK THEM | PAY IT FORWARD

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BRINGING IT BACK | 60 SECONDS

Now, thank them.

Text them two lines: what they did, and what it made possible.

NAME IT | THANK THEM | PAY IT FORWARD

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BRINGING IT BACK

Be that person.

For someone on your team. Starting Monday.

NAME IT → THANK THEM → PAY IT FORWARD

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Let’s Connect

BRINGING IT HOME | STAY CONNECTED

Questions? Let’s keep the conversation going.



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Add QR code

TODAY’S RESOURCES

Slides and all three handouts

First 90 Days Plan, Stay Interview, Career Map

Add QR code

FEEDBACK

How was today’s session?

Two minutes, anonymous

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