

ABSTRACT

Factors Influencing Behavioral Health Providers Entry to and Exit from the Workforce: A Synthesis of Survey Data



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Abstract

Throughout the field of behavioral health, strategies to expand the workforce are being expanded. However, the systemic causes that undermine the facilitators for entry and exit to the workforce are not as commonly understood. This study aims to assess the factors influencing behavioral health providers entry to and exit from the workforce by aggregating and summarizing secondary data from four surveys of physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and psychiatrists. Specifically, we examine data from four surveys: Integrated Postsecondary Education Systems (IPEDS), the 2022 American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) Salary Survey, the 2021–2022 American Psychiatric Nurses Association (APNA) Workforce Survey, and the 2022 American Psychiatric Association (APA) Membership Survey. Our results demonstrate that specific provider types will likely need tailored solutions to address reasons for entering, staying, or leaving the behavioral health workforce. From the IPEDS survey, we show that the number and proportion of physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants enrolled in training programs and awarded a degree have remained relatively stable between 2019 and 2020, with more physicians enrolled in training programs and awarded degrees than their nurse practitioner and physician assistant peers. Data from AAPA demonstrate that small proportions of the physician assistant workforce works in addiction or psychiatric sub-specialties, and few have plans to move to or from these specialties. Data from the APA annual member survey provide insights on reasons psychiatrist no longer practice. One of the top five reasons psychiatrists are leaving the workforce is burnout.

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