



# Mental Health

**Establish a grant program to offset the cost of licensure supervision hours for mental health professionals, helping to grow and sustain Tennessee's behavioral health workforce.**

## WHY

Tennessee continues to face a shortage of licensed mental health professionals, particularly in rural and underserved areas or among children and adolescents with acute needs.

A significant barrier to licensure is the cost of required supervision hours, which can be financially prohibitive for early-career professionals. A state-funded grant program would reduce this burden, accelerate licensure, and help build a more robust behavioral health workforce across the state.

Investing in the next generation of mental health providers is an investment in the well-being of Tennessee's children and families. By removing financial barriers to licensure, we can ensure that more qualified professionals are available to meet the growing demand for mental health services—especially for youth experiencing trauma, anxiety, or behavioral challenges.

Unlike scholarships or loan repayment programs, which support individuals still in school or repaying debt, this initiative targets professionals who have already completed their education and are ready to enter the field. By covering the cost of required supervision hours, the state can accelerate their entry into the workforce and more quickly address the behavioral health provider shortage.

**In 2024, there was one mental health professional for every 500 people in Tennessee, an improvement from one per 842 in 2014. The ratio of providers varies significantly by county from 1:26,790 to 1:230.<sup>1</sup>**

**In 2021-22, 62% of Tennessee youth with major depressive episodes did not receive any treatment, representing 69,000 youth.<sup>2</sup>**

Supervision hours necessary for advanced licensure:<sup>3</sup>

**Clinical Social Worker:** 100 hours

**Professional Counselor:** 100 hours

**Professional Counselor/Mental Health Services Provider:** 150 hours

**Marital/Family Therapist:** 200 hours

**Clinical Pastoral Therapist:** 270 Hours

**Supervision sessions often range from \$80-\$100 per hour, meaning the cost of supervision can range from \$8,000 - \$27,000.<sup>4</sup>**

**In Tennessee, many mental health positions requiring masters level education but not licensure pay between \$39,000 - \$61,000 annually.<sup>5</sup>**