



Recruitment TIPS

“In general, the need to initiate a recruitment intervention for your organization is indicated by: inability to attract the right applicants; or not attracting enough applicants to meet organizational needs.” – toolkit.ahpnet.com

- Use the tips and resources on this fact sheet to better understand how to succeed at drawing the employees you want into your organization.



Successful Workforce Recruitment

Successful employee recruitment depends on several factors:

- An inclusive culture that celebrates diversity and equity. This is the backbone of a professional work environment everyone will want to be part of.
- Use of outcome data for the organization to know what work is getting done and who is doing it. Storylines can be developed from historical evidence (data) of previous successes. These can be used in the interview to describe the potential of the position, expectations of the new hire, and the company’s culture and values.
- A positive story of your organization shared everywhere you have a presence. Let the world know about what you have accomplished and the lives affected by your work, and people will be excited about joining your team.

A Recruitment Plan

Think strategically to make your job attractive to people who may be new to the behavioral health workforce and to those with previous experience looking for a new challenge.

- Market your organization [Marketing Ideas for 2022 and Beyond](#)
- Develop a job description specific to who you want to hire [Write a Killer Job Description](#)
- Think of ways to accommodate people with disabilities [Job Accommodation Network](#)
- Focus on diversity [12 Ways to Improve Your Diversity Recruiting](#)
- Invite potential candidates to attend a hiring party with or without their resumes [Hold a Hiring Party at Your Office](#)
- Add peers to your staff [The Peer Workforce](#)
- Hiring for several positions? Conduct a group interview [Group Interview Guidelines](#)
- Offer employee benefits even if it cuts into your budget [Top 5 Reasons to Offer Employee Benefits](#)



Recruitment TIPS

Recruiting Peers

A peer is someone who shares an important trait with others; a person who has “been there” and has a unique understanding of the condition or experience. Convincing peers there is a place for them in the continuum of behavioral and mental health treatment and recovery means being able to show how peer input saves lives. [Value of Peers Infographics: General Peer Support \(samhsa.gov\)](#)

Peers also work with families and caregivers, offering relatable support and education to parents and others who love or advocate for someone with a behavioral health disorder. [Value of Peers Infographics: Parent Support \(samhsa.gov\)](#)

Understanding Competencies

Evaluating candidates for a position involves more than reviewing a summary of previous job experience or hard skills. You want to know what knowledge and behavior makes them good at their job. These traits are called competencies. Examples of competencies include making improvements to processes, conducting strategic planning, and data-driven decision making. There are core competencies like problem solving and negotiation that are applicable everywhere, and there are competencies specific to a job or an industry.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) offers a technical assistance publication (TAP) about competencies necessary for addiction counselors: [TAP21 Addiction Counseling Competencies](#). Review this publication and others like it (see Recruitment Tools Fact Sheet) when writing your job description and incorporate language about competencies as a qualification. Those who have them will recognize what you are seeking and respond in their resume accordingly. This will create a better hiring pool for you to choose from.

Job Boards

[Mentalhealthwork.com](#) — Dedicated to the full spectrum of mental health jobs.

[ihirementalhealth.com](#) — Curated jobs for mental health professionals

[Sample Peer Specialist Job Description](#) — Template job description for a young adult peer support specialist

Workforce Retention

Evidence increasingly shows that focusing on workforce retention is the greatest predictor of recruitment success and organizational strength. The behavioral health field has turnover rates as high as 150 percent per year among frontline, direct-care workers ([mhttcnetwork.org](#)). Your workforce is a valuable asset; retain them with defined career paths, reasonable workloads, a living wage, professional development, 21st century technology, paid benefits, and exuberant recognition of the importance of their work.



Recruitment STRATEGIES

“The practice of recruitment and retention in the behavioral health workplace tends to focus on clinical and paraprofessional staff, but the advent of healthcare reform and the meaningful use of health information technology are quickly changing the equation for behavioral healthcare providers.” – Patrick Gauthier, AHP



Helping Employees with the Social and Economic Impact of COVID-19

Low wages, high caseloads, burnout, poor staff mental health, lack of equity and diversity in the workplace. None of it is new in behavioral health, but all of it is worse since the pandemic, and your employees need to know you have their back. A potential employee will gauge the quality of your services and care of clients by the quality of care and support you provide for your workforce, which is why you need to have a compassion fatigue plan in place. The [SAMHSA Mental Health Technology Transfer Center \(MHTTC\) Network](#) has produced tips and strategies for practitioners and supervisors to support their teams during COVID-19 and other disaster situations.

[Healthcare Professionals: Coping with Stress & Compassion Fatigue](#)

[Provider Wellbeing During a Public Health Crisis](#)

[Supportive Practices for Mental Health Professionals During Pandemic-Related Social Distancing](#)

Understanding How Potential Employees View Salary and Benefits

Today’s workforce has seen the lines between work and personal life become increasingly blurred and has begun to realize the value of non-traditional benefits such as home-based work, childcare assistance, gym discounts, and wellness programs. Opportunities for personal growth and acquisition of new strengths, including individualized career paths, having a voice in how you do your job, and leadership development is increasingly important for both new and seasoned behavioral health professionals. See what employees value most about their jobs by virtually visiting the best mental health care providers in the United States, whose staff reveal what makes these organizations so great to work for. [The 20 Best Mental Health Care Companies to Work For.](#)

Reducing Turnover and Retaining Employees

Provide Orientation and Onboarding

The goals of orientation are relatively narrow: Get employees on the payroll, sign them up for benefits, and give them a brief overview of the company’s culture, products/ services, and values.



Recruitment STRATEGIES

The term “onboarding” has a more comprehensive reach and a broader perspective. The primary difference between onboarding and orientation is that the goal of onboarding is decreasing the time it takes for a new hire to reach the minimum expected productivity level on the job.

Your incoming employee’s first impression of their new job and manager is instantaneous, which is why it is essential to take planning and delivery of orientation and onboarding seriously. This is the first introduction they will have to their career setting, and if it is a negative, confusing, or inadequate experience, according to [Inc.](#), the chance of them leaving within the first 6 months is over 50 percent.

Effective toolkits and checklists can be used as a template for creating your own orientation plan. Adapt them to align with your organization’s processes and priorities, and your new hires will feel welcomed, enthusiastic, and clear about their role.

[Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center Orientation Toolkit](#)

[Healthcare Facility Onboarding Checklist](#)

[Clinical Supervision Onboarding Checklist](#)

Update Your Organization’s Service Delivery

Ninety-seven percent of the members of the [National Council for Mental Well-Being](#) reported in September 2021 that they had trouble hiring enough qualified employees and similar trouble retaining them. Turnover happens when hard-won additions to your team decide the job they have been hired to do is too stressful. There may be too much paperwork, too many cases with little capacity to handle them, or not enough work/life balance, which makes their career hard on their family.

Incorporate Evidence-Based Practices

Evidence-based practices (EBPs) in clinical provision and service delivery work because they have evolved to cut through wasted time and poor methodologies to capture measurably better treatment outcomes for the patient and provider. Maximizing the use of service delivery EBPs in your facility shows your staff that you value their time and their intellect, and that you are taking concrete steps to help them upgrade their performance and efficacy as treatment providers. Some examples:

- **Telehealth** — In the litany of treatment innovations that have been fine-tuned due to the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth stands out as one that allows behavioral health treatment specialists to help the most patients possible while maintaining connection with those who would have fallen off the treatment grid without live visits. [Why Telehealth Is So Important for Mental Health](#)
- **Realistic Job Previews** — Use a day-in-the-life approach to demonstrate the rewards and challenges of an advertised position. This recruiting method clarifies the employee’s



Recruitment STRATEGIES

role and presents the reality of the job in a way that may not match the applicant's expectations. This is not a bad outcome, as those who were less suited for the position may take themselves out of consideration. Employees who have experienced a realistic job preview are more likely to be high performers because of their informed commitment to the organization and heightened understanding of the job's responsibilities. [The Academy to Innovate HR](#) has a guide for how to deliver realistic job previews and illustrates best practices for their maximum effectiveness.

- SAMHSA has more than 150 EBP guides for use in the treatment of substance use disorders and serious mental illness. <https://www.samhsa.gov/resource-search/ebp>
- Retention begins the moment your new employee walks through the door. See Retention Tips, Tools, and Strategies for more information.



Recruitment TOOLS

“The secret of my success is that we have gone to exceptional lengths to hire the best people in the world.” – Steve Jobs



Hiring and Supporting Peers

[SAMHSA Core Competencies for Peer Workers](#) is a complete resource for peer workers, including parents and families, engaged in behavioral health services.

[Mental Health America Center for Peer Support](#) contains trainings, webinars, facilitator guides, and other resources for peers.

[Peer Support Toolkit](#) is 275-page guide that includes recruiting and hiring information from the Philadelphia Dept. of Behavioral Health Services.

[Peer Provider Toolkit](#) was written to support peers in integrated care, but the information is readily adapted to peer workforce in local settings.

[Recovery Community Organization Toolkit](#) provides support and focus for grassroots addiction recover mobilization of peers, services, resources, and their advocates. Case studies of communities, their milestones, and lessons learned make up the core of the toolkit with a chapter on specific steps to creating an RCO.

Building Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion into Your Workplace Culture

“Mental health is the next frontier of the diversity, equity, and inclusion movement.”
mindsharepartners.org

Employees from diverse backgrounds may face microaggressions and unconscious bias at work that impacts their safety and sense of well-being. The stigma of being different is common to both the behavioral health and ethnically diverse population, which is why behavioral health organizations must operate at the intersection of DEI support and mental health treatment in both service delivery and in hiring.

[Improving Cultural Competency for Behavioral Health Professionals](#) is a free online training from HHS and the Office of Minority Health to develop knowledge and skill of BH providers around culturally appropriate care.



Recruitment TOOLS

[DEI Resources from SAMHSA SOAR](#) lists links from their document, “Guidance for Improving Staff Engagement in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion”

[Black Employee Mental Health in the Workplace: A Curated List of Organizations and Resources](#) includes ideas about changes companies and leadership can make to support Black employees and links to organizations and resources supporting Black mental health.

Recruiting People with Disabilities

People with disabilities are the largest minority group in the U.S., and the most underutilized in recruitment and hiring. According to the [Disability Funders Network](#), over 65 percent of working-age adults with disabilities are unemployed. Of these who do work, nearly one third earn an income below the poverty level. [Ask MEO](#) makes connections between employers struggling to find qualified candidates and pre-qualified applicants. CareerOneStop provides information for employers and jobseekers on [ADA laws and job accommodations](#) and a page of [job search resources](#) that can help your organization know where to place your recruitment ads.

Compensating and Providing Benefits to Nonprofit Employees

[Compensation for Nonprofit Employees](#) from the National Council of Nonprofits discusses pay and other issues involved in attracting candidates to employment at a nonprofit.

[Effective Employee Benefits for Nonprofits Begin with Culture](#) argues that benefits are not one-size-fits-all, and that your organization’s workforce should be asked what they value most over and above pay so an inclusive and customized benefit plan can be developed.

Marketing Your Organization

[8 Easy Steps to Marketing Your Nonprofit Organization](#) includes basic information for those starting out.

[40 Low-Budget Marketing Ideas for Your Small Business](#) provides inexpensive ideas that can produce big results.

[Understanding the Role of Social Media in Marketing](#) says there are no right or wrong ways to use it—be yourself and make your online persona reflect whatever fits your brand. But be consistent. If you can’t maintain a regular presence, don’t start.



Recruitment TOOLS

Writing a Job Description

[The Job Description Writer](#) sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor is a tool that walks you step-by-step through the process of building a meaningful job description, starting with just an occupation and a location.

[A Providers Guide on How to Use Core Competencies in Behavioral Health](#) was written by the Annapolis Coalition for SAMHSA as the first guide for using competency-based approaches. Never fully released but still online, it is the original, and still useful, resource for writing job descriptions and recruitment plans.


Creating Career Paths for Employees

[6 Ways to Develop Employee Careers](#) Establishing clear career paths helps retain employees because it sets up milestones on a timeline and gives motivation to learn new skills and take pride in achievements. Career paths attract quality candidates, boost employee engagement, and reduce turnover. It is also indicative of an employee-centric culture which is another motivator to stay and grow with the organization.

Cultivate a Future-Focused Behavioral Health Workforce

AHP has strengthened and empowered the behavioral health workforce for over 35 years. By helping facilities, providers, and states better understand and train their staff, AHP is both advocating for the well-being of behavioral health professionals and advancing the model for behavioral health workforce excellence.

That's why building and maintaining effective recruitment and retention practices within the behavioral health field are more important than ever. In the face of intense workloads, stigmas around conditions treated, and undefined career paths, many facilities are in a constant state of recruitment. At AHP, we are dedicated to meeting the needs of this all-important workforce, so they can feel good about representing their organization when patients and members need them the most.

**AHP is ready
to help.** 

We know what it takes to attract the best talent in the behavioral health industry because we've been creating more effective and sustainable methods of recruitment and retention for decades.

Our administrative services can be instrumental in ensuring that an inclusive culture is fostered, and candidate competency is properly evaluated. Reduce turnover and retain employees with AHP's proven toolkit.

Contact us now for more information:
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