



New Jersey Mental Health Institute  
3635 Quakerbridge Road, Suite 35  
Mercerville, NJ 08619  
Phone: 609-838-5488 Fax: 609-838-5489

Contact: Shauna Moses, 609-838-5488 extension 204; smoses@njamhaa.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 20, 2023

## Leadership Academy for Behavioral Healthcare Professionals Expands this Critical Workforce

MERCERVILLE: Nationwide, there is an estimated shortage of nearly 4.5 million behavioral health providers to meet the level of need, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) *Behavioral Health Workforce Report, 2020*. This dearth in the behavioral health workforce has been an ongoing challenge for years and resulted in 56% of adults with mental illness and 60% of youth with major depression not receiving any treatment in 2021, according to Mental Health America's *Access to Care 2022*. The workforce crisis also accounts for nearly 94% of individuals aged 12 and older with substance use disorders (SUD) not being treated in 2021, based on SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health. To address this tremendous need, the New Jersey Mental Health Institute (NJMHI) launched the Leadership Academy for Behavioral Healthcare Professionals in October 2022.

"The workforce crisis impacts not only service delivery, but also relationships, staff morale and the ability to recruit new staff. It stifles culture," said Kendria McWilliams, MBA, a Leadership Academy Mentor, Chair of the NJMHI Board of Trustees, and CEO of Maryville Addiction Treatment Center.

As the behavioral healthcare workforce crisis is significantly impacting the entire nation, this program is available to individuals in the field from throughout the country. Though some meetings may be conducted in a hybrid format, most of them are solely virtual.

The Academy presents opportunities for emerging leaders not only in clinical roles, but also in all positions — administrative, information technology, legal, finance, human resources, etc. — in mental health, SUD, intellectual/disabilities and other social services organizations. "While building their skills for future leadership roles, mentees will also contribute to their organizations' long-term sustainability and improve the quality and consistency of care to the individuals served," said Debra L. Wentz, PhD, Executive Director of NJMHI and President and CEO of the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies (NJAMHAA), which established NJMHI in 2000.

"Behavioral health care will never be the same. There are greater demands and higher expectations, as well as fewer staff. Mentors and coaches provide unique insight into this new normal, allowing mentees to manage their own expectations," said Valerie Ortense, BS, MBA, Leadership Academy Mentor and Director of Grants and Development, Preferred Behavioral

**More**

## **Leadership Academy Expands Critical Behavioral Health Workforce/Page 2 of 2**

Health Group. “Through this academy, mentees also embark on a journey of self-discovery. They uncover beliefs, values and experiences that shape them as leaders. Discovering their best selves as leaders builds the capacity to support and value each individual, lending to much-needed retention,” Ortense added.

### **Mentees Share Positive Experiences with the Leadership Academy**

“I have greatly benefited from the Leadership Academy! As a new leader, there is so much to learn. Having the knowledge and support from my coach and mentor has helped me be successful in my new leadership role,” said Adiba Saleem, LCSW, Manager, Acute Partial Hospitalization, AtlantiCare Behavioral Health. “We brainstorm strategies for my team and me to improve how we care for patients and each other, and insightful suggestions enable me to navigate challenges and opportunities. I definitely recommend the Leadership Academy!”

Marinell Brzostowski, Integrated Case Services Manager, Easterseals New Jersey, shared that when she started this program, she “was struggling as a leader, especially being a supervisor of people who were my peers.” She added, “My mentor and coach are pushing me to improve my staff, including their documentation, which is challenging for them to do as they are in the field a lot. My mentor and coach are helping me in both my personal and professional life.”

### **Applications Are Due August 8, 2023**

The second cohort of the Leadership Academy will begin in September, and applications and payments are due August 8, 2023.

This year-long program is cost-effective, as programs with comparable, high-caliber coaches and mentors cost \$10,000 to \$30,000. The fee for mentees from NJAMHAA member agencies is only \$950, and the cost for individuals at nonmember organizations is \$3,000. Employers pay the fees for their staff.

Click [here](#) for additional details and to download fact sheets and applications for mentees, mentors and coaches.

---

The New Jersey Mental Health Institute was established by the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc. (NJAMHAA) in 2000 to promote quality mental health and substance use services through training, technical assistance, research, and policy development.

NJAMHAA is a statewide trade association representing 164 organizations that serve New Jersey residents with mental illness and/or substance use disorders, and their families. NJAMHAA’s mission is to promote the value of its members as the highest quality behavioral healthcare providers for the residents of New Jersey through advocacy and professional development.