

# Behavioral Health Fellows Program 2023 Application & Program Guidance

Cohort	BH Fellows Application Due	Cohort Start Date
Cohort 1 (existing staff)	March 31, 2023	June 2023
Cohort 2 (new-hire staff)	June 1, 2023	July 2023
Cohort 3 (new-hire & existing staff)	July 15, 2023	September 2023

For Questions: [bhfellows@jhf.org](mailto:bhfellows@jhf.org)

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## Purpose

A key purpose of the Behavioral Health (BH) Fellows Program is to provide loan repayment assistance or free professional certificate access to qualified behavioral health care staff in return for a commitment to work at the BH Fellow Program-sponsoring service providers that have a current Community Care Behavioral Health contract to deliver behavioral health services in Allegheny County. The application information applicants provide is used to evaluate their eligibility, qualifications, and suitability for participating in BH Fellows. In addition, information from other sources is considered (e.g., credit bureau reports).

An individual's service contract, application, required supplemental forms, supporting documentation, related correspondence and data are maintained within Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) for use by DHS or its contracted partners to monitor BH Fellows-related activities.

## Effects of Nondisclosure

Disclosure of the information sought in this application is voluntary. However, if not submitted, except for the replies to questions related to race, ethnicity, and gender, an application may be considered incomplete and therefor may not be considered for the BH Fellows Program.

## Program Overview

Allegheny County Behavioral Health Fellows is a competitive program collaboratively administered by Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Community Care Behavioral Health, Jewish Healthcare Foundation, and Community Family Advocates. The BH Fellows holistic approach to application review allows for the program to consider the BH Fellows applicant as a whole person and to consider recipients who are likely to remain at their service provider even after the BH Fellows service commitment is fulfilled.

The BH Fellows program's purpose is to provide qualified educational loan repayment or professional certificate access in exchange for a minimum two-year, full-time service commitment at a program-approved provider in one of six target service areas within Community Care's network of providers (i.e. eligible providers offering Blended Service Coordination, Family Based Mental Health,

Child- Diversion and Acute Stabilization, Crisis Services, Targeted Case Management – SUD, and Integrated Dual Disorder Treatment) (the “Target Service Areas”).

Applicants are encouraged to explore the types of work opportunities that exist in eligible providers’ Target Service Areas before applying to the BH Fellows program (See *Table 1*). BH Fellows must fulfill their service obligation at an eligible provider (see Service Requirements section) to qualify for education loan repayments or receive free professional certificate access.

### Program Mission

In connection with the Covid-19 pandemic and workforce shortage issues broadly, there is a lack of access to behavioral healthcare in Allegheny County, particularly in the six levels of care eligible for the BH Fellows program. To address this need, the BH Fellows program will provide *existing* BH provider staff and *new hires* with loan repayment or professional certificate access, minimum salary standards, and continuous professional training to increase access to quality behavioral health services in the County. DHS and Community Care expects to reserve up to 33.5 percent of available BHF funds to support retention of existing staff (“Existing Staff”) and 66.5 percent of BHF funds to support new hires into the workforce in the target service areas (“New Hires”). Through this approach, DHS and Community Care aim to support providers who are well-positioned to address the shortage of behavioral health care staff and to meet our community’s behavioral health care needs.

The Fellows Program is funded with federal and state funds and as such the BH Fellows Program and the Fellows are required to comply with applicable laws and regulations.

### Service Options

The BH Fellows offers two contract service options:

- 1) A contract for *BH Fellows loan repayment*, for participants with a bachelor’s or master’s degree serving in a program-eligible role with a BH Fellows-sponsoring behavioral health service provider; or
- 2) A contract for *BH Fellows professional certificate*, for participants without either a bachelor’s or master’s degree serving in a program-eligible role with a BH Fellows-sponsoring behavioral health service provider.

Applicants must choose one of these two service options. Should an applicant receive a BH Fellows award, participants must continue to provide service in the same capacity as agreed upon in the initial two-year contract throughout the service obligation associated with that contract.

### Benefits of Participating in the BH Fellows Program:

The BH Fellows Program offers Fellows these core components:

- **A financially sustainable job that makes a difference.**
  - BH Fellows will increase access to critically important behavioral health care to the County’s most vulnerable.
  - The jobs that are eligible for this program must meet **minimum salary standards**.
- **Funds for educational loan repayment or free access to a professional certificate program.**

The BH Fellows program provides funds for loan repayment (up to \$25,000 for a bachelor’s degree OR up to \$45,000 for a master’s degree) or free access to a professional certificate program.

- **Ongoing training and professional development through a cohort model.** While Fellows are employed by program-sponsoring providers in Allegheny County, BH Fellows within a cohort will come together at least quarterly through the two-year service term for professional development and team-building experiences to support Fellows' continuous learning, professional relationships, and growth; and
- **A Supervisory Learning Community and Training Program** for fellows who fulfill their two-year service obligation in a program-eligible supervisory role.

#### Loan Repayment Information - Applicants with a Bachelor's or Master's Degree

For a two-year service commitment, the BH Fellows program will award participants that have a bachelor's or master's degree funds toward their qualifying education loan balance. The time period in which the qualifying educational loans were incurred must coincide with the time period of the applicant's bachelor's or master's degree education. All qualifying loans must have been incurred before the BH Fellows program application submission deadline.

#### Fellows' Service Obligation

Individuals accepted into the BH Fellows program will be required to sign a legally binding contract agreeing to serve a required two-year service term as an employee in a **Program-eligible role** in a Target Service Area with a Program-approved provider. This component of BH Fellows is a strict requirement. BH Fellows loan repayment participants will not receive loan repayment until after a Fellow completes the two-year service obligation. Fellows who do not complete the contractual work commitment will not be eligible for the loan repayment award/professional certificate access.

**Program-eligible roles.** *Table 1* summarizes the behavioral health care jobs that are eligible for BH Fellows. To receive service-credit toward the two-year service obligation, a Fellow must be employed by a Program-approved provider in one of the following roles:

*Table 1: Qualifying Service Areas, Eligible Staff Roles, Minimum Staff Qualifications*

Level of Care/Target Service Area	Eligible Staff Roles
Blended Service Coordination	• <b>Service Coordinator</b> (Bachelor's degree) with no experience
	• <b>Service Coordinator</b> (Master's degree) with no experience
	• <b>Service Coordinator Supervisor</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bachelor's degree with 5 years direct care experience, 2 of which include supervisory experience – <i>or</i> –</li> <li>○ Master's degree in related field with 3 years direct care experience</li> </ul>
Family Based Mental Health	• <b>Bachelor's Level Clinician</b> with 1-year relevant experience
	• <b>Master's Level Clinician</b> with 2 years relevant experience

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Supervisor</b> – Bachelor’s degree with 3 years relevant experience</li> </ul>
<b>Crisis Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Peer Services</b> – high school equivalency + willingness to share recovery journey</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Crisis Clinician Associate</b> - Bachelor’s degree with no experience</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Clinician I</b> - Bachelor’s degree with 2 years clinical experience – <i>or</i></li> <li>• Master’s degree with no experience</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Clinician II</b> - Bachelor’s degree with 2 years MH direct care experience (1 yr in crisis) – OR – Master’s degree with 1-year mental health direct care experience</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Clinician III</b> - Bachelor’s degree with 5-6 yrs crisis experience – <i>or</i></li> <li>• Master’s degree and 3-4 yrs experience</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Clinical Supervisor</b> - Master’s degree and 4-5 yrs experience, including supervisory experience</li> </ul>
<b>Child RTF (Short-term) – Diversion and Acute Stabilization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurse</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master’s level clinician</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bachelor’s level</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milieu Staff</li> </ul>
<b>Targeted Case Management – SUD</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case Manager (Bachelor’s)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case Manager (Master’s)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Case Manager Supervisor</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Master’s degree with 3 yrs relevant experience</li> <li>○ Bachelor’s degree with 5 yrs relevant experience, 2 of which include supervisory experience</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Integrated Dual Disorder treatment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurse (Master’s degree)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program Manager <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Master’s degree and 4 yrs relevant experience – or- Bachelor’s degree in related field + 5 yrs relevant exp and cert in co-occurring disorders within 6 mo. of hiring</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team Leader / Master’s level clinician <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Master’s degree in related field and 2-yr of co-occurring disorders experience and 2 yrs program administration experience</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocational Specialist / Clinician <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bachelor’s degree in related field and 3 yrs relevant experience – or – Master’s degree and 1 year experience</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer Specialist <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ High school equivalency + willingness to share recovery journey</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Anticipated Awards

In 2023, the BH Fellows program is expected to be highly competitive. The program anticipates more applicants for awards than there are openings available.

The BH Fellows program expects to run staggered application cycles and for awards to be allocated in tranches. With this approach, the program aims to create smaller cohorts of participants that serve their BH Fellows tenure together. Within 2023, the application cycles are as follows:

Cohort	BH Fellows Application Due	Cohort Start Date
Cohort 1 (existing staff)	March 31, 2023	June 2023
Cohort 2 (new-hire staff)	June 1, 2023	July 2023
Cohort 3 (new-hire & existing staff)	July 15, 2023	September 2023

\*\*These estimates are subject to change based on available funding, provider staff capacity, and applicant need and interest.

We expect to add additional cohorts and target service areas through 2024. Award timelines for 2024 cohorts are expected to be announced in the last half of 2023.

## Eligibility Requirements

### Eligibility Requirements for Loan Repayment

To be eligible for a BH Fellows award **for loan repayment**, all applicants must:

- Have earned a bachelor's degree or master's degree;
- Have employment or intention to obtain full time employment working *a minimum of 32 hours* per week for a minimum of 45 weeks per year at a Program-sponsoring provider in a program-eligible role requiring a bachelor's or master's degree (Please see *Table 1*); and
- Have outstanding qualifying educational loans (defined below) incurred while seeking a bachelor's or master's degree.

**An applicant is ineligible for loan repayment through BH Fellows** if they have at the time of their application or at any time during their Service Period (defined below) any of the following situations:

- a) are excluded, suspended, or disqualified by a participating BH Fellows provider for reasonable cause;
- b) no longer have any outstanding qualifying educational loans because 100% of their qualifying educational loans have been repaid through another program;
- c) have defaulted on any federal payment obligations (e.g., student loans, federal income tax, etc.) DHS or its contracted partner will verify that the applicant has not defaulted on any federal payment obligation by running a credit report that will be recorded as a hard inquiry<sup>1</sup>, which is a form of review of the applicant's credit history;
- d) have had any debt written off as uncollectible; or
- e) have transferred away from a program-eligible role after submitting the application.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, these inquiries are typically inquiries by lenders after you apply for credit. These inquiries may impact your credit score because most credit scoring models look at how recently and how frequently you apply for credit. Please find additional information at <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/ask-cfpb/whats-a-credit-inquiry-en-1317/>

## Eligibility Requirements for Professional Certificate Access

To be eligible for a BH Fellows award **for free professional certificate access**, all applicants must:

- a) Have earned a high school diploma or equivalent; and
- b) Have employment or intention to obtain full time employment working at least 32 hours per week for a minimum of 45 weeks per year at a Program-sponsoring provider in a program-eligible role (Please see *Table 1*)

## Review Factors

In reviewing the eligible applicants, the BH Fellows Program determines awardees using holistic review factors including: letter of recommendation; provider performance review, as applicable; work, education, life experiences; and community service involvement. In addition, a critical aim of the BH Fellows program is that it supports a cohort of Fellows serving the wide diversity of Allegheny County residents with behavioral health needs.

The following review factors are considered when determining BH Fellow awardees:

- 1) **Financial Need (relevant to applicants seeking BH Fellows loan repayment).** Among applicants seeking educational loan repayment, funding preference is given to qualified applicants with the greatest financial need defined as those qualified applicants whose debt-to-salary ratio (i.e., total qualifying educational loan balance divided by years earning degree multiplied by the minimum annual salary in a BH Fellows-eligible job role) is 30% or higher. Subsequently, awards will be made to individuals whose debt-to-salary ratio is outside this threshold as program capacity remains available.
- 2) **School Transcript (submit for highest level of school achieved).** Transcripts are reviewed as a part of the total application; GPAs under 2.0 may indicate the applicant is not ready for BH Fellows; transcripts are also considered to evaluate an applicant's status in achieving their degree.
- 3) **Current provider-employer's most recent employee evaluation.** For existing staff applicants.
- 4) **Recommendation letter.** The applicant must arrange for one (1) letter of recommendation from an academic or professional reference to be submitted on their behalf. The candidate's selected recommender will be sent a questionnaire seeking the recommender's responses to questions about a) the applicant's character and fitness to serve the behavioral health needs of vulnerable populations; and b) reliability to meet and sustain the requirements of the program.
- 5) **Response to essay questions.** Applicant must demonstrate a commitment to a career in behavioral healthcare; interest/motivation in providing care to underserved communities and vulnerable populations; and/or relevant work experience or activities (e.g., community service, research, and internships) that have prepared the applicant to work with underserved populations.
- 6) **Resume/CV:** Applicant must summarize their educational qualifications, work experience, and volunteer/community service in chronological order.

## Qualifying and Non-Qualifying Educational Loans



**Qualifying Educational Loans** - Include government and private (commercial) loans for actual costs paid for tuition and reasonable educational and living expenses incurred while attending school where the applicant obtained a bachelor's or master's degree. Additionally, participants will only receive funds for repayment of outstanding qualifying educational loans that have a current balance.

**Non-Qualifying Loans** - Include but are not limited to:

- 1) Loans for which the applicant incurred a service obligation that will not be satisfied by the BH Fellows application deadline.
- 2) Loans obtained for training in vocational school.
- 3) Loans obtained from family members, lenders, or other entities that are not subject to federal or state examination and supervision as lenders.
- 4) If an applicant's qualifying educational loan is consolidated/refinanced with ineligible non-qualifying debt (such as loans obtained for a Ph. D. or J.D.) or loans of another individual, the entire consolidated/refinanced loan is ineligible.
- 5) Parent loans (and all loans made to parents).
- 6) Credit card debt or personal lines of credit.
- 7) Perkins Loans (unless the applicant can provide documentation as indicated in the instructions for supporting documents that such loans are not subject to cancellation).
- 8) Loans that are paid in full.

### **Consolidated Educational Loans**

An applicant may consolidate or refinance loans before the application deadline provided the individual submits the loan documentation for the consolidated or refinanced loans as part of the required supporting documents component of the online application. If the loan documentation is not included with the application by the deadline, the consolidated or refinanced loan(s) will not be considered for loan repayment. The original loan dates for the consolidated or refinanced loans must coincide with the time period of the applicant's qualifying education for a bachelor's or master's degree. The consolidated/refinanced loans must be from a government (federal, state, or local) or private commercial lender and must include only the qualifying educational loans of the applicant.

## **FELLOWS' AWARD PROCESS**

### Confirmation of Interest

Individuals who apply to participate in the BH Fellows and who are selected for a BH Fellows award will be notified by a Confirmation of Interest email to confirm their continued interest in receiving a BH Fellows award. The COI will also include instructions to sign and return the BH Fellows service contract. Once countersigned by DHS or its designee, this contract obligates the applicant to a BH Fellows service commitment. If the applicant does not respond to the COI email by the deadline, the applicant will no longer be considered for participation in the BH Fellows cohort. Once an applicant fails to respond within the deadline or expressly declines the award, the award will be offered to another applicant. A decision to decline an award will be treated as final and cannot be revoked. However, if an applicant declines the award before returning a signed service contract, the applicant may re-apply for the program in the future.

If the individual confirms interest and returns a signed service contract:

- that individual will have a specific period of time to obtain an offer and accept a position in a program-eligible role with a participating provider. **It is the individual's responsibility to obtain employment in a program-eligible role with an eligible provider.** The Fellow must promptly inform [bhfellows@jhf.org](mailto:bhfellows@jhf.org) in writing of the details of such employment in advance of starting employment.
- Individuals who sign and return the service contract but who due to delay *caused by the employing provider's new-hire processes* do not secure employment with a participating provider within the allotted time provided will be able to either: adjust their two-year service start date to the actual start date of employment if the actual start date is within 30 days of the cohort start date; *or* defer their application to a future cohort.
- If an applicant fails to begin employment with their provider-employer within the time provided, the applicant is in breach of the contract and may be permanently disqualified from receiving future awards under the BH Fellows program.

If the individual confirms interest and returns a signed BH Fellows service contract, the individual's signed contract submitted with the COI is countersigned by the Director of DHS or designee. The date the service contract is countersigned becomes the effective date of the contract and the two-year service obligation begins on that date. The participant will begin to accrue service credit under the contract as soon as it becomes effective.

After receiving the individual's confirmation of interest and signed service contract, the BH Fellows program will send participants correspondence that includes a Participant Award Worksheet for the fellow to complete and return. The Participant Award Worksheet is a detailed report reflecting all the participant's eligible loans that qualify for repayment under the BH Fellows repayment program. Each loan listed must have its original loan amount, the original loan date, the type of loan, and the consolidation dates, if applicable.

### Information about Taxes

At this time, BH Fellows loan repayments are subject to federal taxes and may also be subject to state income taxes.

Participants should consult the IRS regarding any additional tax obligations. All tax questions should be directed to a tax professional or the IRS at <https://www.irs.gov> or through the TAX HELPLINE at 1-800-829-1040. The BH Fellows program is unable to provide an individual with an aftertax calculation or any tax advice or information.

## Understanding the Contract and Service Obligation

BH Fellows must incur, at a minimum, a two-year full-time service obligation (the "Service Period").

- The BH Fellows Cohort 1 award and contract is for the two-year period starting May 2023 – May 2025.

- The BH Fellows Cohort 2 award and contract is for the two-year period from July 2023 – July 2025.
- The BH Fellows Cohort 3 award and contract is for the two-year period from September 2023 – September 2025. (The application window for Cohort 3 is not open yet)

### Service Requirements

By accepting a BH Fellows award, the participant will be required to enter into a contract with the County or its designee that will include the terms and conditions and the obligations of the Fellow's participation in the program and service requirements (the Fellow's "service contract").

Fellows are required to fulfill the two-year service term working for an eligible provider offering services in one of the six target service areas. Participants must refer to the list of eligible providers and eligible roles in *Table 1* to verify that their selected provider and employment role meets the service requirements described in this section.

- Participants must continue to work in the program-eligible role for a program-approved behavioral health service provider for the duration of the two-year contract to receive service credit under the BH Fellows loan repayment contract and the BH Fellows professional certificate contract.<sup>2</sup>
- Service credit will not be given for employment prior to the effective date of the BH Fellows loan repayment or professional certificate contract. The effective date of the contract is the date it is countersigned by the Director of DHS or designee.
- If a participant fails to begin program-eligible, full-time service on the effective date of the contract, the individual may be found to have breached the BH Fellows contract, moved for termination from the program, and disqualified from receiving future awards under the BH Fellows program.
- Once an individual applies and is awarded a contract for a particular service area for a program-approved provider, generally, **the individual cannot switch to another service area, role, or provider during the two-year service period.**

### Fellows' Commitment to the BH Fellows Program

Fellows are required to remain in good standing with their provider employer and successfully complete the minimum period of two-years of Service Period.

Fellows are also required to attend scheduled training and professional development sessions, which will be convened in-person at locations around the County as conditions permit. Fellows are required to keep their provider employer and the BH Fellows program advised of any changes of name, contact information, or employment during the period of their BH Fellows service commitment.

Fellows are also required to promptly notify their provider employer and the BH Fellows Program of any change in their status that could affect their eligibility.

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<sup>2</sup> In rare situations, should an unforeseen event cause a disruption in a Fellow's ability to complete the scheduled two-year Service Period, a Fellow may be allowed to defer the completion of the Service Period until a time when the Fellow can complete a full two-year service period and meet program requirements. Decisions to permit such a deferral shall be made on a case-by-case basis and the decision will be within the sole discretion of the Program.

Fellows must remain in full compliance with all applicable laws and regulations during the Service Period.

Participating providers and BH Fellows are expected to participate in BH Fellows' planned program evaluation on an annual basis.

## Program Compliance

### Work Absences

No more than 7 weeks per service year under the service contract may be spent away from the Fellow's program-sponsoring provider-employer. Any leave/absences totaling more than 7 weeks (approximately 35 work days) in a service year will extend the service contract end date.

### Service Verification

The BH Fellows program verifies every three months that participants are in compliance with the service obligation. Participants must cooperate with their provider-employer in completing required documentation to verify ongoing compliance with the service obligation. Failure to timely verify ongoing compliance with the service obligation may prevent a participant from receiving service credit or lead to a recommendation that the participant is in breach of the service contract.

### Leaving a Program-Sponsoring Provider-Employer Before Completing the Service Obligation

If a participant stops working at the approved provider's site without prior written approval of the BH Fellows program, the individual may be placed in default of the BH Fellows contract. If a participant is terminated for cause, they may be recommended for default. Default is a failure to complete the contractual service commitment.

### Transfer Request to Another Approved Provider-Employer

The BH Fellows program expects that participants will fulfill their service obligation at their initial provider-employer. However, the BH Fellows program understands that circumstances may arise that result in a participant's need to leave the initial provider-employer and complete the service obligation at another approved provider. If a participant can no longer continue working at the initial provider, the participant must immediately contact the BH Fellows program at [bhfellows@jhf.org](mailto:bhfellows@jhf.org). Detailed instructions on how to complete a transfer request will be provided. The request must include the reason for the transfer. As part of any transfer process, the Fellow's current provider will be asked to send DHS an email that includes: a) Any care competency issues related to the participant while employed at the approved provider's site; b) Any disciplinary action related to the participant while employed at the provider's site; and c) Confirmation of the participant's last employment date with the provider. Transfers require **prior approval**. The participant will be notified via email of the decision regarding the transfer request. If the transfer request is approved, the participant may continue full-time service at the approved transfer provider-employer.

### Maintain an Acceptable Level of Employee Performance

BH Fellows participants must meet and maintain acceptable levels of performance in their employment through the required two-year service obligation. Determinations of an acceptable level of employee performance are made by the provider-employer. The failure of a Fellow to meet and maintain the acceptable level of employee performance requirement is grounds for DHS or its designee to move to terminate the participant's BH Fellows service contract.

### Notify BH Fellows of Any Changes in Employment Status

Participants must notify in writing the BH Fellows Program at [bhfellows@jhfh.org](mailto:bhfellows@jhfh.org) and as soon as one of the following events is anticipated:

- a) A change in the completion date of the required two-year Service Period
- b) A leave of absence approved by the provider-employer
- c) Withdrawal or dismissal from the provider's employ
- d) Placement on an employee performance improvement plan

### Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program

Participants whose loans are forgiven through the U.S. Department of Education's Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program and who no longer have outstanding qualifying educational loans must immediately contact the BH Fellows program for further instructions.

### The Biden-Harris Student Debt Relief Plan

Participants whose Education Department-held loans are granted debt relief through the 2022 Student Debt Relief Plan must immediately contact the BH Fellows program for further instructions. **These participants' BH Fellows loan repayment awards will be reduced by any amount of the 2022 Student Debt Relief Plan that is received.**<sup>3</sup>

### Existing Staff Applicants – Securing Service Credit

BH Fellows applicants who are existing staff: to receive service credit, the BH Fellows Program must approve *in advance* the existing staff applicant's provider and role through which the applicant wishes to receive service credit and complete their Service Obligation.

- *For existing staff who are already working in an eligible role for a Program-sponsoring provider and seeking to remain in that role as a Fellow:*
  - These individuals must apply for BH Fellows to join the first or third cohort;
  - After being selected to join BH Fellows, *then* this individual must indicate to DHS or its designee their sponsoring provider-employer name, staff role, and service start date<sup>4</sup> and receive confirmation of approval of that role from DHS - before that Fellow's work time can be credited toward the Fellow's service obligation.
  - Note that a provider's participation in BH Fellows does not automatically mean that the provider's existing staff applying to the program will receive an award under BH Fellows.
- *For existing staff who want to apply for BH fellows but who are currently working in roles that are NOT eligible for BH Fellows OR for providers that are NOT participating in BH Fellows:*

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<sup>3</sup> As of the time of this writing, courts have issued orders blocking the Biden Administration's student debt relief program and the program is not currently accepting applications. The BH Fellows' program requirement that BH Fellows loan repayments be reduced by the amount of payment received through Biden's debt-relief plan assumes the plan will be upheld and go into effect.

<sup>4</sup> The date that will start the Fellow's required two-year service term.

- These individuals must *apply for BH Fellows to join the first or third cohort*; after being selected to join BH Fellows, the candidate must *then obtain an offer for a program eligible role with a BH Fellows-sponsoring provider*. DHS or its designee must approve in advance that individual's role through which they wish to complete their service obligation before the individual's work time can be credited toward their two-year service obligation.

#### New Hire Applicants - Securing Service Credit

To receive service credit, BH Fellows participants who are applying to the program as a new hire and who receive an award to be a Fellow will have a specific period of time to: 1) receive an offer of employment into a program-eligible role with a program-sponsoring service provider; and 2) start full-time employment within a specific period of time from the date the employment offer is accepted. The new hire must promptly inform the BH Fellows program in writing of the details of such employment in advance of starting by emailing [bhfellows@jhf.org](mailto:bhfellows@jhf.org). Any employment performed before notifying the BH Fellows program of the participants role, provider-employer, and employment start date will not be credited toward the participant's two-year service term.

#### Unemployment During Service Obligation

BH Fellows participants who resign or are terminated from their staff position must contact the BH Fellows Program immediately at JHF email. The BH Fellows program may provide the participant a certain period during which to obtain an offer and accept a position in an eligible role with an eligible provider depending on the facts and circumstances relating to the resignation or termination. It is the participant's responsibility to obtain employment in an eligible role with an eligible provider. Participants who do not secure employment at an eligible provider within the allotted timeframe provided by the BH Fellows program will be recommended for termination of the BH Fellows contract.

#### Maternity/Paternity/Adoption Leave

If a participant plans to be away from their site for maternity/paternity/adoption leave, they are required to inform the BH Fellows Program before taking the leave. The BH Fellows Program allows participants to be on suspension within the timeframes permitted by state and federal law; however, participants must adhere to the leave policies of their provider employer.

## Application Information

Applicants are encouraged to read this guidance completely and thoroughly before proceeding with an application. The guidance explains in detail the rights and obligations of individuals selected to participate in the BH Fellows Program. Applicants should ensure they have a complete understanding of: (1) the commitment to serve in an eligible role with an eligible provider in a target service area for a minimum of two (2) years, and (2) the financial and other consequences of failing to meet those obligations. Applicants are strongly encouraged to research employment opportunities that exist in various eligible providers' target service areas before applying to the program (see *Table 1*). All participants are required to fulfill the service obligation in the role for which they are approved by the BH Fellows Program.

#### **Application Deadlines**

The online application and all supporting documents for COHORT 1 must be submitted to the APPLICATION PORTAL by March 31, 2023

The online application and all supporting documents for COHORT 2 must be submitted to the APPLICATION PORTAL by May 7, 2023

The online application and all supporting documents for COHORT 3 must be submitted to the APPLICATION PORTAL by July 15, 2023

## **COMPLETING AN APPLICATION**

BH Fellows application consists of:

- 1) an online application; and
- 2) required supporting documentation

Applicants should keep a copy of the application package for their records. Applicants are responsible for submitting a complete application. The information submitted in the online application must match the information submitted in the supporting documentation. Application packages are initially reviewed to determine their completeness and consistency with application requirements and underlying supporting documents. Application packages deemed incomplete (e.g., blank, password protected, illegible, or incomplete application materials) as of the application deadline will not be considered. The BH Fellows program will not accept requests to update a submitted application or permit the submission/resubmission of incomplete, rejected, or otherwise delayed application materials after the deadline. In addition, BH Fellows program staff will not fill in any missing information or contact applicants regarding missing information. No changes are accepted to an applicant's school or discipline after the application deadline.

## **Notification of Award**

Individuals eligible for awards will receive the confirmation of interest email. To confirm continued interest in accepting the award, an applicant must respond by the deadline indicated in the email. If the applicant does not respond to the BH Fellows Program by the deadline, the applicant is no longer eligible.

Applicants in COHORT 2 (new-hire participants) who will not begin employment by the end of July 2023 must decline the award. An applicant selected for an award, but who decides not to accept the award and who does not return a signed contract, can decline the award without penalty. However, once a decision to decline the award has been made, there will not be any opportunities to reclaim the award. A decision to decline the award is final and cannot be changed under any circumstances. An applicant who declines an award (and who does not return a signed service contract) can apply in the next application cycle.

This Application and Program Guide is designed to assist prospective applicants with the Program and the application process. The Fellow's Contract, referenced above, will be the document that governs the terms and conditions of the Fellow's participation in the Program.

## **Online APPLICATION**

This section shows you what the online application says. To submit your application, you will need to access the online application through Allegheny County DHS's website, at the BH Fellows landing page.

Thank you for your interest in applying to **Behavioral Health (BH) Fellows**.

**Purpose:** the purpose of the BH Fellows program is to help with the recruitment and retention of behavioral health direct care staff in Allegheny County, in return for a commitment to work at eligible provider of BH services with a shortage of staff to meet the Allegheny County community's need for behavioral health services.

**Questions?** For more information please

- email [bhfellows@jhf.org](mailto:bhfellows@jhf.org)

**I. Complete Online Forms:**

**a) General Information**

- First name (legal)
- Last name (legal)
- Preferred First name
- Social Security Number
- Address
- City
- State
- Zip code
- Email address
- Primary phone number
- Emergency contact name
- Emergency contact phone number

**b) Cohort Applying to:**

- a) Please indicate which BH Fellows cohort you are seeking to join:
  - COHORT 1 – for existing staff currently working for a BH Service Provider in Allegheny County (**preference** to be given to staff currently working in a Program-sponsoring provider in a Target Service Area) (Cohort 1 start date: May 2023)
  - COHORT 2 – for new-hire staff (Cohort 2 start date: July 2023)

\*\*\*\*the application window for COHORT 3 is not yet open\*\*\*\*

**c) Which BH Fellows award contract are you applying for?**

- a) BH Fellows loan repayment service contract
- b) BH Fellows professional certificate service contract

**d) Education Information – list the highest degree you have earned or expect to earn by Summer 2023.**

- a) High School



- High School Name
- High School Address
- GED (yes/no)
- Graduation date
- b) College / University
  - Degree
    - Bachelor's
    - Master's
    - Degree received? (Yes/No)
    - Graduation date / Expected date of receipt

e) **Background /Demographic Information.**

*Your privacy is protected.*

We use demographic information to find out if our recruitment efforts are reaching all segments of the population, consistent with state and federal laws. Completing the demographics section is optional. We do not provide demographic information to any BH provider's hiring officials.

\_\_\_ I want to share my demographic information to help improve recruitment and application processes.

\_\_\_ I do not wish to answer the demographic questions.

Please indicate your gender identity:

- Male
- Female
- Genderqueer/Queer
- Transgender Male
- Transgender Female
- Self-describe:
- Prefer not to answer

Please indicate the racial/ethnic origin to which you most closely identify (select all that apply).

- Black or of African descent
- White or of European descent
- Hispanic or Latino/a
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Western Asian/Middle Eastern
- East Asian/Far Eastern
- South Asian/Indian (Subcontinent)
- Southeast Asian
- Other Asian

- Multi-racial
- Self-Describe

Please indicate your Veteran Status

- Non-Veteran
- Veteran
- Active Duty Military
- National Guard
- Reserve

**f) Employment in a Program-Eligible Role**

- Are you currently employed in a program-eligible role?
  - If so,
    - please indicate your current role: \_\_\_\_\_
    - please indicate your current provider-employer: \_\_\_\_\_
  - If not,
    - Have you been accepted for employment in a program-eligible role with a BH Fellows-sponsoring provider?
  - If so,
    - Please indicate the role you accepted: \_\_\_\_\_
    - Please indicate the provider that offered employment in that role: \_\_\_\_\_
  - If you have not yet been accepted for employment, do you intend to apply for program-eligible employment? (yes/no)
- Please indicate which roles you intend to apply for (check all that apply):

Level of Care/Target Service Area	Eligible Staff Roles
Blended Service Coordination	• <b>Service Coordinator</b> (Bachelor's degree) with no experience
	• <b>Service Coordinator</b> (Master's degree) with no experience
	• <b>Service Coordinator Supervisor</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bachelor's degree with 5 years direct care experience, 2 of which include supervisory experience – <i>or</i> -</li> <li>○ Master's degree in related field with 3 years direct care experience</li> </ul>
Family Based Mental Health	• <b>Bachelor's Level Clinician</b> with 1-year relevant experience
	• <b>Master's Level Clinician</b> with 2 years relevant experience
	• <b>Supervisor</b> – Bachelor's degree with 3 years relevant experience
Crisis Services	• <b>Peer Services</b> – high school equivalency + willingness to share recovery journey

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Crisis Clinician Associate</b> - Bachelor's degree with no experience</li> <li>• <b>Clinician I</b> - Bachelor's degree with 2 years clinical experience – <i>or</i> Master's degree with no experience</li> <li>• <b>Clinician II</b> - Bachelor's degree with 2 years MH direct care experience (1 yr in crisis) – OR – Master's degree with 1-year mental health direct care experience</li> <li>• <b>Clinician III</b> - Bachelor's degree with 5-6 yrs crisis experience – <i>or</i> Master's degree and 3-4 yrs experience</li> <li>• <b>Clinical Supervisor</b> - Master's degree and 4-5 yrs experience, including supervisory experience</li> </ul>
<b>Child RTF (Short-term) – Diversion and Acute Stabilization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurse</li> <li>• Master's level clinician</li> <li>• Bachelor's level</li> <li>• Milieu Staff</li> </ul>
<b>Targeted Case Management – SUD</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case Manager (Bachelor's)</li> <li>• Case Manager (Master's)</li> <li>• <b>Case Manager Supervisor</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Master's degree with 3 yrs relevant experience</li> <li>○ Bachelor's degree with 5 yrs relevant experience, 2 of which include supervisory experience</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Integrated Dual Disorder treatment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurse (Master's degree)</li> <li>• Program Manager <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Master's degree and 4 yrs relevant experience – <i>or</i> – Bachelor's degree in related field + 5 yrs relevant exp and cert in co-occurring disorders within 6 mo. of hiring</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Team Leader / Master's level clinician <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Master's degree in related field and 2- yrs of co-occurring disorders experience and 2 yrs program administration experience</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Vocational Specialist / Clinician <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bachelor's degree in related field and 3 yrs relevant experience – <i>or</i> – Master's degree and 1 year experience</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Peer Specialist <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ High school equivalency + willingness to share recovery journey</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**II. Submit Required Supporting Documentation.** Each document submitted must include the applicant's First and Last name.

- a) **Authorization to Release Information.** This form authorizes entities identified in the form to disclose information regarding applicants who have applied and/or been selected for the BH Fellows award. The form must be dated and have the applicant's signature.
- b) **For existing staff applicants – Most Recent Employee Performance Evaluation.** Please provide a copy of your most recent performance evaluation completed by your employer.
- c) **Unofficial Transcript.** Please provide for the highest level of school achieved.

If the applicant is seeking repayment for educational loans incurred while attending college/university, applicants must submit transcripts from each college and university for all coursework that is directly related to the applicant's attainment of the degree (bachelor's or master's) for which educational loans were incurred.

School transcripts must state the applicant's name, the name of the institution, dates of attendance, and courses taken. If a degree was obtained, the transcript must include the type of degree and the date it was conferred or the applicant must provide another appropriate document with this information (e.g., a copy of a diploma).

- d) **Resume/CV:** Applicants must submit a current curriculum vitae (CV) or résumé, which documents all education, training, dates of all degrees conferred, and a complete employment history.
- e) **Loan Information and Documentation.** Information must be provided for each loan for which the applicant is seeking repayment. Review the types of loans that qualify and do not qualify for repayment under the BH Fellows program. Supporting loan documentation must be provided for each loan, as indicated below. BH Fellows will check the applicant's credit report to determine loan eligibility, loan balances, and repayment history status. All loan documents should include the applicant's name and other identifiable information including account numbers.
- f) **Required Loan Documentation:** Please provide the loan documentation as described here for each loan type.
  - 1. **Federal Loans:** Applicants must provide a complete copy, electronically uploaded in PDF format, of their Official Student Aid Report with no missing pages, which summarizes all the information provided on the FAFSA. SARs received from institutions other than the Department of Education will not be accepted, and failure to provide an Official SAR if requesting repayment of a federal loan will make an application ineligible. The SAR will contain the applicant's Expected Family Contribution (EFC), the number used in determining eligibility for federal student aid. The EFC must appear in the upper portion of a paper or electronic SAR.
    - a. The BH Fellows Program will deem partial or expired SAR submissions as incomplete and the application will be rejected. The BH Fellows program only accepts official SARs; any other type of document will make the applicant ineligible. Information on how to obtain your official SAR can be found at

[How do I view my Student Aid Report \(SAR\)](https://studentaid.gov/help/view-sar)  
(<https://studentaid.gov/help/view-sar>).

2. **Individual Private (Commercial) Loans:** Applicants must provide:
  - a. Disbursement Report(s) from the lender, showing the loan type, original loan amount, and original loan date; must have the applicant's name and account numbers. Participants may need to submit more than one type of Disbursement Report per loan to meet these requirements; and
  - b. The most recent Account Statement for each loan showing the current balance, lender's name, account number, and applicant's name (call or visit the lender's website to obtain).
3. **Individual Private (Commercial) Loans:** Applicants must provide Disbursement Report(s) clearly showing that all the loans that were consolidated had the applicant's name on the loan documentation.
  - a. A letter directly from the lender containing the required loan information is acceptable.
  - b. Each loan must have its original loan amount and the original loan date indicated; and
  - c. Submit the most recent Account Statement for the consolidation showing the current balance, lender's name, account number, and applicant's name (call or visit the lender's website); and
  - d. Submit the original loan application document.
4. **Consolidated Private (Commercial) Loans:**
  - a. Please provide your Disbursement Report(s) clearly showing that all the loans that were consolidated had the applicant's name on the loan documentation.
    - i. A letter directly from the lender containing the required loan information is acceptable
    - ii. Each loan must have its original loan amount and the original loan date indicated
5. **Perkins Loans**
  - a. Please provide Disbursement Report(s) from the lender showing the applicant's name, loan type, original loan amount, and original loan date. Participants may need to submit more than one type of disbursement report per loan to meet these requirements.
  - b. Please submit the most recent Account Statement for the consolidation showing the current balance, lender's name, account number, and applicant's name (call or visit the lender's website to obtain).
  - c. Please submit Documentation from the school showing that the loans are not subject to cancellation under 34 CFR Part 674; **OR**
  - d. documentation from the current lender indicating that the Perkins Loans were consolidated and paid off.
  - e. Perkins Loans that are subject to cancellation are not eligible for BH Fellows repayment.

g) **Recommendation Letter:** The applicant must arrange for one (1) letter of recommendation from an academic or professional reference to be submitted on their behalf. Please provide the following information for your selected recommender:

- ii. **Recommender Name:**
- iii. **Recommender Title:**
- iv. **Recommender Email address:**
- v. **Recommender Phone Number:**

- For the one required letter, the BH Fellows online application system will automatically generate and send an email notice to the applicant's desired recommender, with a copy of the email notice to both the applicant and the program, with a questionnaire and contact information the recommender shall complete and use to return their recommendation letter into the program in support of the applicant's application. Please note that it is the applicant's responsibility to independently verify that their recommender has submitted the letters of recommendation. If the original recommender cannot provide a recommendation letter, the applicant must submit the name and email address of another individual selected to complete the letter of recommendation **before the application deadline**. An application will not be complete until the recommender has submitted a signed (either electronically or by hand) letter of recommendation. The applicant will not be notified if the recommender does not complete or submit the letter. The responsibility is on the applicant to submit a complete application, including the letter of recommendation.
- The recommender questionnaire which will be automatically sent to your selected recommender will seek the recommender's responses to questions such as:
  - For how long have you known the Applicant?
  - In your opinion does this Applicant possess high standards of good moral character and fitness required to serve the behavioral health needs of vulnerable populations? Explain in detail.
  - Do you know of anything noteworthy that reflects favorably or unfavorably on the Applicant's reliability to meet and sustain the requirements of the BH Fellows program?

h) **Required Essay Responses.** The applicant must provide typed responses to the essay questions listed below. Please upload a document containing your essay responses in word or pdf format to meet this requirement. Each response is limited to a 500-word count or less (about a full page with single spacing) in Times New Roman 12-point font. The applicant must include their **first and last name** on the top of each document.

For all applicants:

**Essay 1:** How does joining BH Fellows fit into your longer-term goals or career path?

**Essay 2:** Describe the value of the BH Fellows Program; why is it important? What positive impact would you expect it to have for individuals and families in Allegheny County?

For existing-staff applicants:

**Essay 3:** Give an example of a time when you supported a client with a behavior change or treatment planning?

It is the applicant's responsibility to upload required supporting documents by the application deadline. Failure to submit a complete application package by the deadline will result in the application being deemed ineligible, and the applicant will not be considered for a BH Fellows award. Applicants must upload all supporting documents at the time of the online application submission. Each document submitted must include the applicant's first name, last name, and date of birth.

**Applicants will receive an "application submitted successfully" confirmation message once the application has been successfully submitted via the online portal. The application review process will take approximately 4-6 weeks. Applicants selected for a BH Fellows award will receive a confirmation of interest email. Once notified, applicants can choose to accept or decline the BH Fellows award. All Applicants, whether selected for an award or not, will be notified of the decision before the start of the cohort the applicant applied to join.**

## Additional Information

[Resources for applicants](#)

[FAQ](#)