

# The Kaiser Permanente Mental Health Scholar's Academy: Expanding the Mental Health Workforce in California

## Mental Health Workforce Shortage in California

California lacks the mental health workforce capacity to meet the state's current and growing needs. Adding to this challenge, the field is not racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse enough to meet patient needs across the state.<sup>1</sup>



**28%**  
FEWER  
psychologists  
and counselors

**50%**  
FEWER  
psychiatrists

### California doesn't have enough mental health professionals

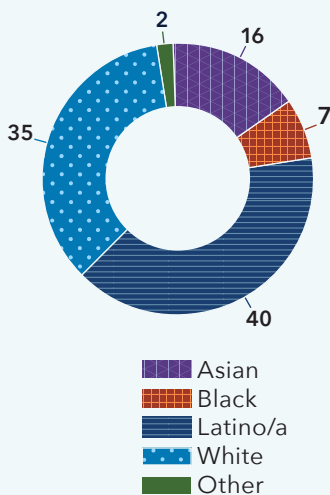
By 2028, experts predict that California will have 50% fewer psychiatrists and 28% fewer psychologists and counselors than needed.<sup>2</sup>

## California's mental health workforce is less diverse than California's population

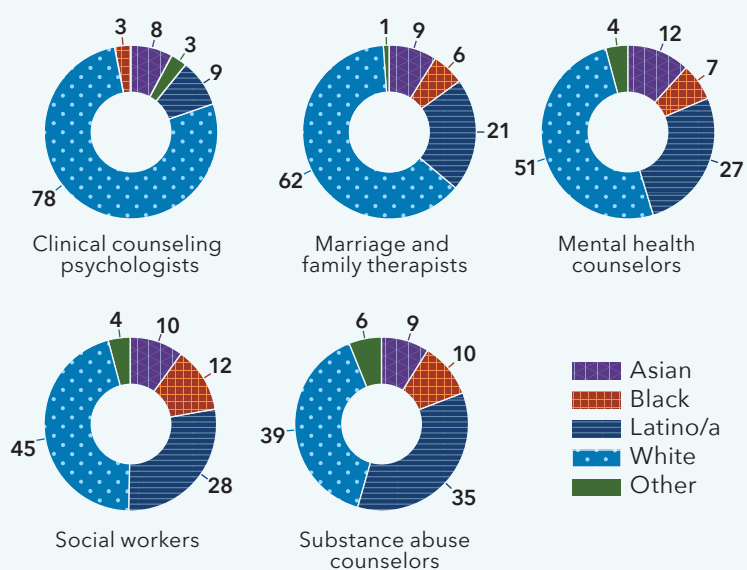
For almost all categories of mental health practitioners in California, the mental health professionals are less diverse than the state's population.<sup>3</sup>

### Race/ethnicity percentages in California

CALIFORNIA POPULATION, 2021



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS, CALIFORNIA, 2015-2019



## The Kaiser Permanente Mental Health Scholars Academy

To address the workforce shortage, Kaiser Permanente is working to hire and retain mental health professionals. One program helping expand the pipeline of highly qualified, diverse, accessible, and experienced mental health professionals in California is the Kaiser Permanente Mental Health Scholars Academy (MHSA), a \$30 million workforce development initiative.

The MHSA launched in 2020 and offers eligible Kaiser Permanente employees the opportunity to pursue masters and doctorate degrees in mental health fields. The MHSA also provides continuing education for mental health professionals and is launching a new \$5 million community based mental health workforce initiative in partnership with Kaiser Permanente Community Health, to expand the program to people not currently employed by Kaiser Permanente as well.

The program will continue over the next 3 years, and as the program expands, we will continue to measure retention rates, conduct periodic assessments of participants' ability to make forward progress toward their degrees, and encourage a continuous increase in diversity across race, ethnicity, and languages. We are glad to be able to help educate, support, and provide consistent opportunities for training and exposure so more students can join the mental health workforce.

The MHSA program, and ongoing hiring and retention activities, are important steps to increase and diversify the mental health care workforce. In addition, [public policy](#) is needed to address the challenge at scale in California and across the country. We are committed to expanding the mental health workforce with a focus on equity, inclusion, and diversity - to provide readily accessible, culturally responsive, equitable care.

### References

Full citations for this document can be found at: [kpihp.org/references-ics](https://kpihp.org/references-ics).

## The MHSA is training new mental health practitioners in California



**243 employees**

have enrolled across California in master's and doctorate programs in mental health areas of study in the MHSA Fall 2020, 2021, and 2022 cohorts.

**93%** The MHSA program has a 93% retention rate.

## The MHSA is committed to increasing diversity and representation in the mental health workforce



**78%**

**of the 243 employees** who have participated in the program are people of color

**40%** **of MHSA students** are bilingual (96 candidates)

### RACE/ETHNIC DIVERSITY OF THE MHSA COHORT

(Cumulative 2020-2022)

