



Mid-America (HHS Region 7)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

# Growing More Than Corn: Nebraska Behavioral Health Workforce Development

Using Policy to Positively Impact the Workforce

Erin Schneider, MSW



# DISCLOSURES

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The MHTTC Network uses affirming, respectful and recovery-oriented language in all activities. That language is:

STRENGTHS-BASED  
AND HOPEFUL

INCLUSIVE AND  
ACCEPTING OF  
DIVERSE CULTURES,  
GENDERS,  
PERSPECTIVES,  
AND EXPERIENCES

HEALING-CENTERED/  
TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE

INVITING TO INDIVIDUALS  
PARTICIPATING IN THEIR  
OWN JOURNEYS

PERSON-FIRST AND  
FREE OF LABELS

NON-JUDGMENTAL AND  
AVOIDING ASSUMPTIONS

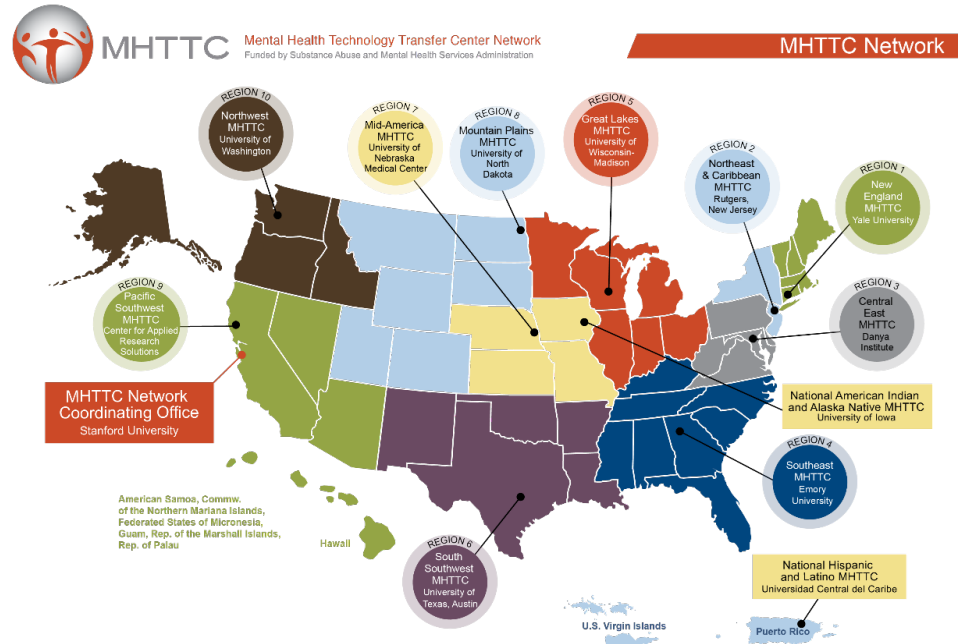
RESPECTFUL, CLEAR  
AND UNDERSTANDABLE

CONSISTENT WITH  
OUR ACTIONS,  
POLICIES, AND PRODUCTS

# Mid-America Mental Health Technology Transfer Center

Established to increase utilization of evidence-based mental health practices.

- Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas.
- Free training and technical assistance.
- SAMHSA grant awarded to the Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska at University of Nebraska Medical Center.  
(5 years, \$3.7 million, grant number: H79SM081769)





# Erin Schneider, MSW

Associate Director of External Relations  
[e.schneider@Unmc.edu](mailto:e.schneider@Unmc.edu)

More information about BHECN can be found at  
[www.unmc.edu/bhecn](http://www.unmc.edu/bhecn)

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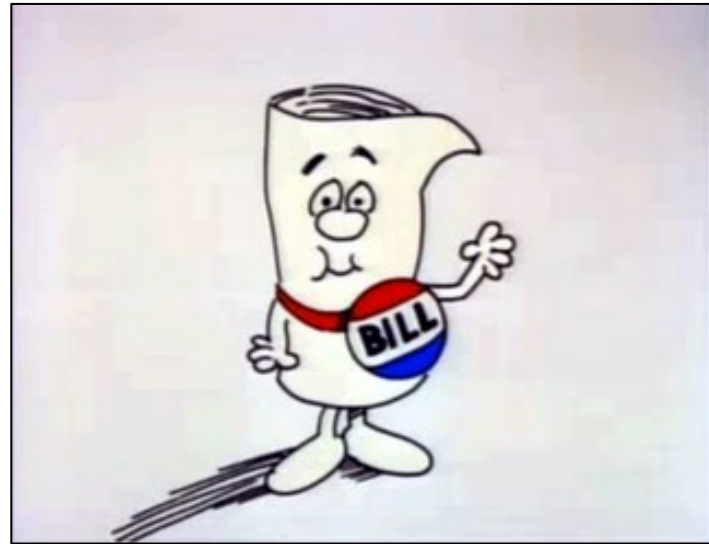
# Objectives

1. Describe how a **state legislature can be a partner** in addressing behavioral health workforce shortages.
2. Discuss how **policy solutions can help leverage training opportunities** for behavioral health students.
3. Describe **how to engage legislators and other behavioral health stakeholders** to create and implement behavioral health workforce policy solutions.

What other topics/questions would you like addressed?

# How many of you have been involved with creating or advocating for legislation?

- Through professional organizations?
- Through your work?
- While in school?
- Personally?



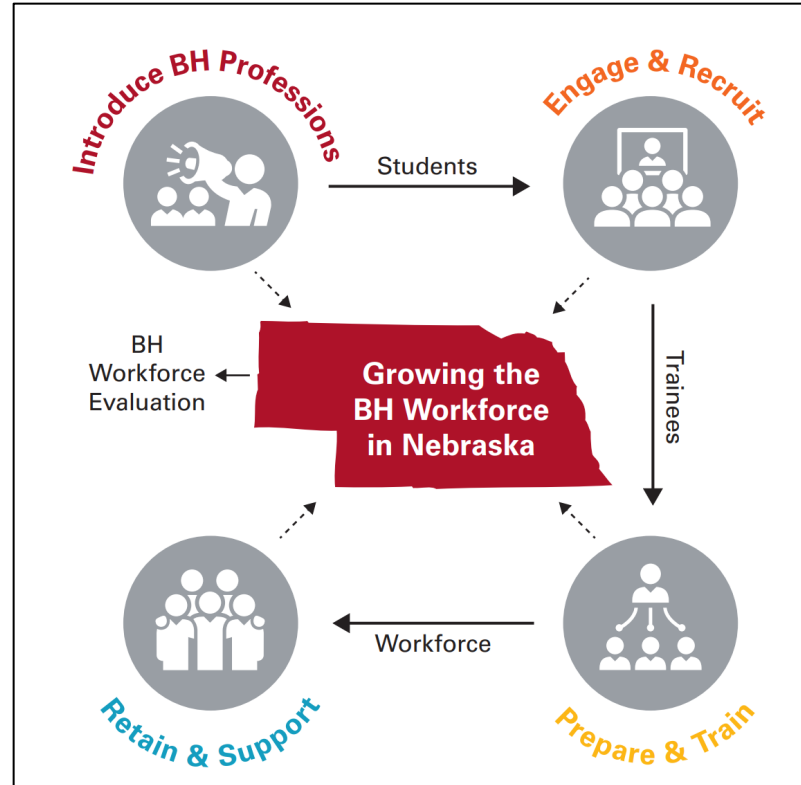
# What is BHECN?

- The Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska (BHECN) was created by the Legislature in 2009 to address the shortage of trained behavioral health providers in rural and underserved areas.
- BHECN works to recruit & educate students in behavioral health fields and trains & retains professionals already in the workforce.



# What we do

- Collect & Report Behavioral Health Workforce Data
- Recruit, Educate and Mentor Students
- Train and Retain Professionals



# History of BHECN – Legislature



# BHECN Legislative Timeline: 2004-Present

Nebraska Legislature passes LB 1083 which formally moved the state away from institutional care delivered at three state-run regional centers towards a more community-based approach.



2004

# Safe Haven Act of 2008



# OOOPPPSSS! We Forgot Age Range!!

- Put a spotlight on the issue of struggling families
- It became national news
- Highlighted the lack of support for families struggling with mental health issues

**What happened next stunned the former State Senator, "It wasn't infants, but kids and teens who were being abandoned. . ."**

Washington Post article featuring State Senator Amanda McGill

# Legislative Crisis Response - 2009





## **SAFE HAVEN ACT**

Effective, November 22, 2008, Nebraska's Safe Haven law has been modified to read as follows:

"No person shall be prosecuted for any crime based solely upon the act of leaving a child thirty days old or younger in the custody of an employee on duty at a hospital licensed by the State of Nebraska. The hospital shall promptly contact appropriate authorities to take custody of the child."

### **Additional Resources**

Health & Human Services Hotline  
**1-800-652-1999**  
[www.dhhs.ne.gov/  
children\\_family\\_services/safehaven](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/children_family_services/safehaven)

Boys Town National Hotline  
**1-800-448-3000**  
[www.boystown.org](http://www.boystown.org)

Emergency Services  
**9-1-1**

Human Services in Nebraska Hotline  
**2-1-1**  
[www.ne211.org](http://www.ne211.org)

# BHECN


BEHAVIORAL HEALTH  
EDUCATION CENTER  
OF NEBRASKA



- Workforce Development Reports to Legislature
- Training for MH Providers
- Increase Psychiatry Residents (add N=8)
- Training Collaborations with Regional Providers
- No additional Funding for other BH Training Programs



2009 – LB603

- 
- Funding for five doctoral level psychology interns in rural practice sites across the state
  - Provide an additional 3,500+ patient visits to children, adolescents and families in rural areas of Nebraska



2015 – LB901

- Created an internship program in Nebraska's Department of Corrections.
- This program provides students with experiential training in working in a correctional setting.



2017 – LB242

# 2022 Legislative Session – An Example

LB1068  
2022

LB1068  
2022

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA  
ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH LEGISLATURE  
SECOND SESSION

## LEGISLATIVE BILL 1068

FINAL READING

Interim Study

Develop Relationships

Understand Your Audience

Garner Support

roduced by Stinner, 48.

st time January 18, 2022

tee: Health and Human Services

OR AN ACT relating to public health; to amend sections 71-829 and

1-830, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska; to change provisions

the Behavioral Health Workforce Act relating to legislative

4 intent and the Behavioral Health Education Center; to require the

5 University of Nebraska to conduct an assessment; to harmonize

6 provisions; to repeal the original sections; and to declare an

7 emergency.

8 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

# Interim Study

LR143 - Interim study to examine the mental and behavioral health needs of Nebraskans, assess the shortages of providers, and determine what is needed to ensure an adequate behavioral health service delivery system

## Document Info

Introduced By: [Stinner](#)

Date of Introduction: [May 12, 2021](#)

## Text Copies

[Introduced](#)

- Process started in 2021
- Brought together working group of behavioral health stakeholders across the state
- BHECN identified as natural place for programming

# Develop relationships

- Worked closely with Senator's staff
- Engaged with other Senators who had interest in behavioral health
- Engaged stakeholders within UNMC
- Engaged with professional associations



# LB1067, LB1068 & LB1066

## LB1068 & LB1067

- Increased the number of prescriber residencies, fellowships
- Increased psychology internships
- Created mental health therapist internships
- Increased BHECN sites

## LB1066

- Internship funding
- Telebehavioral health network
- Education & training related to COVID-19
- Stipends for provisionally licensed

# Understand your audience

- Testified at interim study hearing
- After bill introduction, testified at three committee hearings
- Know your committee and your audience





# Garner support

- Engaged with BHECN Executive Committee, Advisory Boards, and behavioral health stakeholders across the state
- Emails, letters, phone calls
- Outreach and Advocacy versus “lobbying”



# Signed into law!



- LB1068
- LB1014



# BHECN Outreach & Engagement Efforts

- Advisory Board Rep
- Policy Forum
- Participation in Interim Studies
- Participation in Professional Orgs, Associations



# Importance of partnerships



# BHECN Stakeholder Input



BHECN Executive Committee



BHECN Advisory Council



BHECN Student Advisory Board

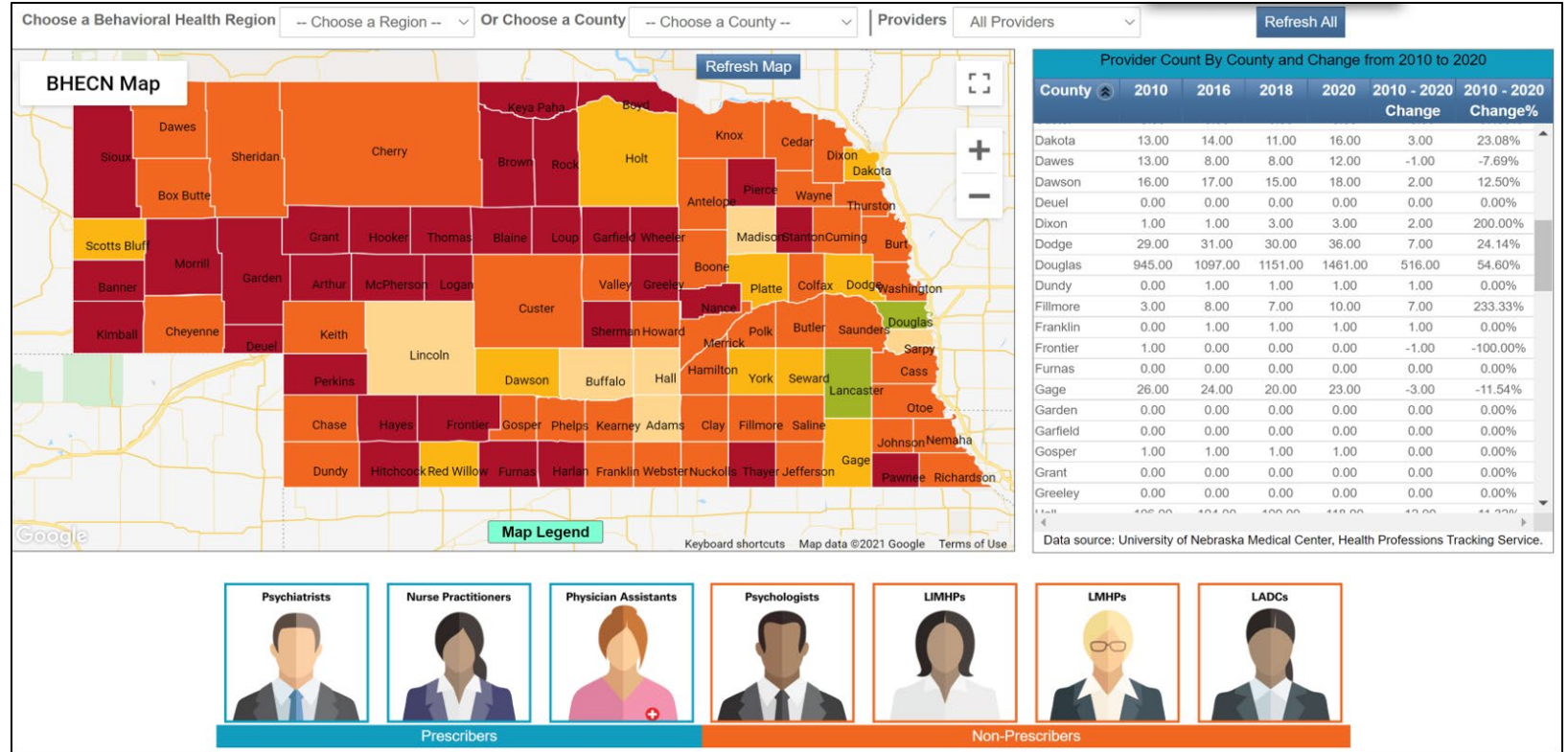


Nebraska Behavioral Health Education Partnership

## **Where members are from:**

- State of NE Division of Behavioral Health
- Community Agencies
- Educational Institutions
- Students
- Rural
- Underserved

# Using Data to Support Needs



# Reporting Our Successes

- Statutorily mandated
- Every two years
- Outlines workforce data
- Metrics on programs and initiatives
- Legislature “sees” BHECN every two years





# Questions?





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