



# Managing and Addressing Behavioral Health Provider Workloads

## 1

### Why Reasonable Workloads Matter

Heavy workloads require individuals to do more than is possible with the time and resources available. A heavy workload is the most significant predictor of emotional exhaustion and behavioral health provider burnout levels. When providers experience burnout, they are more likely to consider leaving their job.

### Pathways to More Reasonable Workloads for Employees

There are several pathways organizations can follow to create more reasonable workloads for staff that provide behavioral health services, including investing in expanding their behavioral health workforce, identifying strategies that allow staff find a healthy work-life balance, offering flexible work hours, and establishing manageable caseloads.

The best practices included in this guide are recommended by leading national workplace initiatives. Most are already implemented by many agency leaders across northwest Michigan in an effort to create reasonable workloads among their staff. Use this resource to identify actionable steps your organization can take to help employees better manage their workloads and reduce staff burnout.

# Workload Management Best Practices

Consider implementing one or more of these strategies within your own agency to assess and/or address workload challenges among your staff.

## Understand Staff Perspectives on Workload Levels

- Talk to or survey employees to learn their perspective about what a reasonable workload would look like inside the organization. Understand their current workload experiences.
- Conduct a time study to understand hours spent on paperwork/administrative tasks

## Implement Workload Management Strategies for Staff

- Put cap on caseload size
- Provide caseload coverage for employees while they are on PTO so that they are less overwhelmed when returning to work
- Incorporate time throughout the workday for staff to complete paperwork
- Pay attention to workload distributions and rebalance when needed
- Encourage staff to take breaks throughout the day and to take time off
- Create spaces within the work environment where staff can relax and take a break

## Enhance PTO and Flexible Work Options:

- Increase the amount of PTO staff are eligible for
- Provide floating holidays in addition to accrued or front loaded PTO
- Offer flexible work schedules, remote work, or hybrid work options to employees
- Amend the compensation structure so that providers are paid on an hourly basis, as opposed to salary. This can help to decrease the amount of time staff are working outside of their scheduled hours

## Create a Culture of Trust Among Staff and Leadership

- Model self-care for staff by taking lunch breaks and PTO regularly as a member of the leadership team
- Create a culture of openness that allow employees to feel comfortable in discussing workload challenges with their supervisor
- Implement a reflective supervision model to allow for consistent communication between staff and their supervisors regarding challenges or concerns around workload and work-life balance

## Provide Staff with Opportunities for Input

- Establish an employee committee with representation from each division within your organization that is included in decision making processes around compensation and benefits to ensure these policies are fair, equitable, and meeting employee needs
- Engage staff in identifying and fixing workflow and paperwork barriers