



# Ohio's Behavioral Health Workforce Crisis

**Teresa Lampl, LISW-S, CEO**

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# About The Ohio Council

- Ohio's trade association representing community mental health and substance use disorder service providers.
- More than 160 members active across the state.
- More information at [www.TheOhioCouncil.org](http://www.TheOhioCouncil.org).

# Ohio Faces a Major BH Workforce Crisis

- Like our counterparts in physical health, Ohio's behavioral health care providers face a severe and worsening staffing crisis.
- The problem comes down to rising, pandemic-driven demand for mental health and addiction treatment and systemic hiring and retention issues that have been made worse by COVID-19.

# Findings: High Demand, Limited Workforce

- Front-line clinical and medical staff have become hard to find, easy to lose, and costly to replace.
- The mismatch between behavioral health care need and demand has begun delay access to care and threatens the continuity of care for patients as well as the long-term sustainability of the system.

*High Demand*

**353%**

The increase in demand among Ohioans for BH services, 2013-2019, according to OhioMHAS.

## *Limited Workforce*

**380 : 1**

The ratio of Ohioans who need behavioral health care to available MH and SUD professionals.

# The “Breaking Point” Survey and Report

- To measure and communicate the true severity of the crisis, The Ohio Council launched a survey of its members in November 2021.
- 68 behavioral health care agencies responded. Nearly all reported higher demand and challenges with recruiting and retaining key clinical and medical staff who provide care.

## *Key Findings: Demand for Services*

**> 70%**

Portion of responding behavioral health agencies that noted rising demand for mental health services among adults and kids in fall 2021.



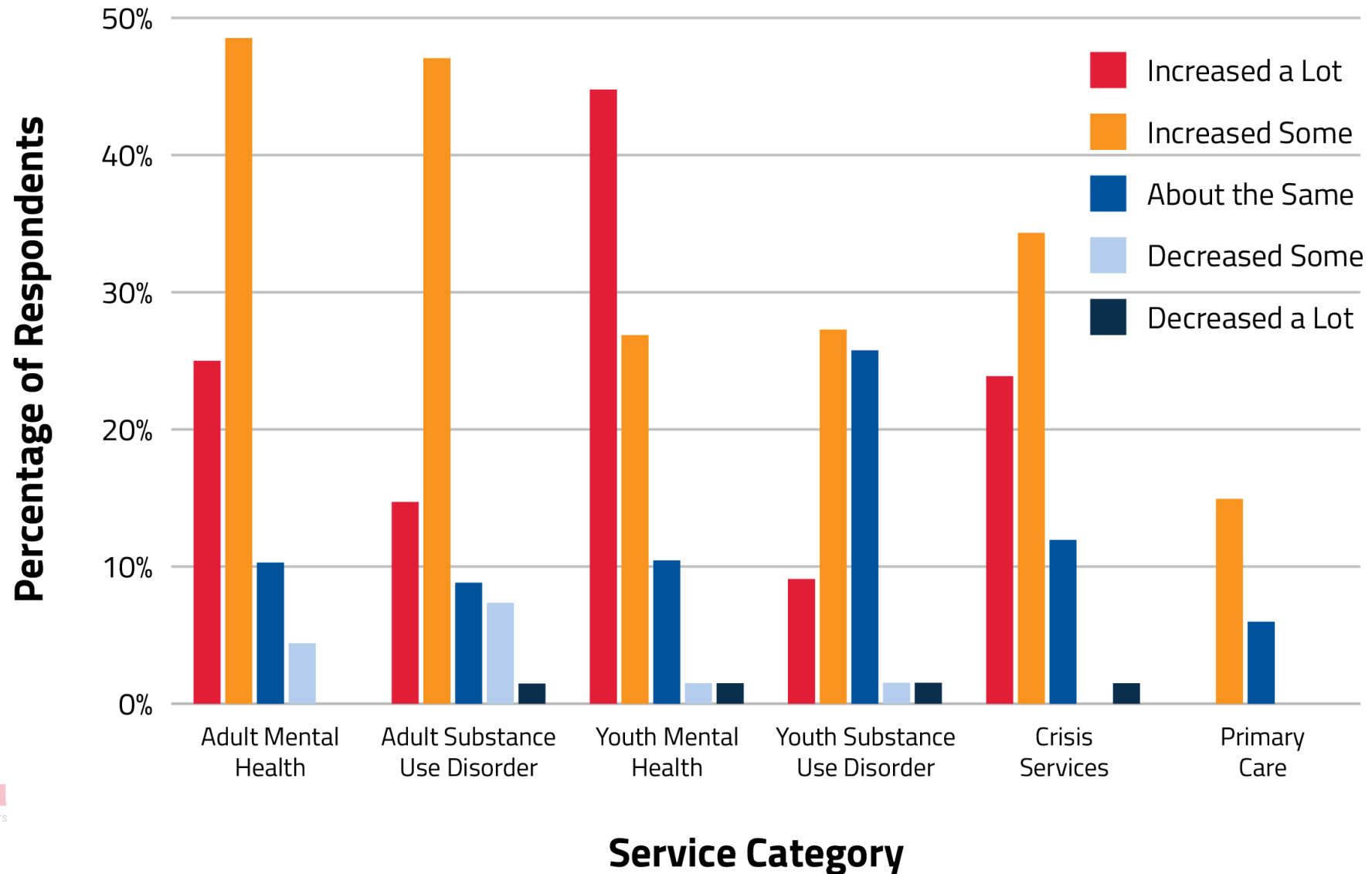
## *Key Findings: Demand for Services*

**> 60%**

Portion of responding behavioral health agencies that noted rising demand for substance use disorder (SUD) treatment among adults in late 2021.

# Reported Changes in Behavioral Health Service Demand (August to October 2021)

(As percentages of responses from 68 Ohio behavioral health agencies, excluding N/A and Unknown responses)



# Why is demand so high?

# Behavioral Health Demand Drivers

- Behavioral Health is viewed as Essential Health
- Pandemic-Related Stress
  - Loved Ones Getting Sick or Dying
  - Social Isolation from Remote Work/School Closures
  - Job Loss/Financial Insecurity
- Resurgent Opioid Overdose Epidemic
  - Ohio's overdose deaths increased 26% last year.

# Workforce Challenges

## *Key Findings: Workforce Challenges*

> 98%

Of responding providers reported difficulty finding new clinical and medical staff.

> 88%

Of responding providers reported difficulty keeping existing staff.

## *Key Findings: Workforce Challenges*

**~77%**

Of responding providers reported worsening turnover among clinical/medical staff.

**>91%**

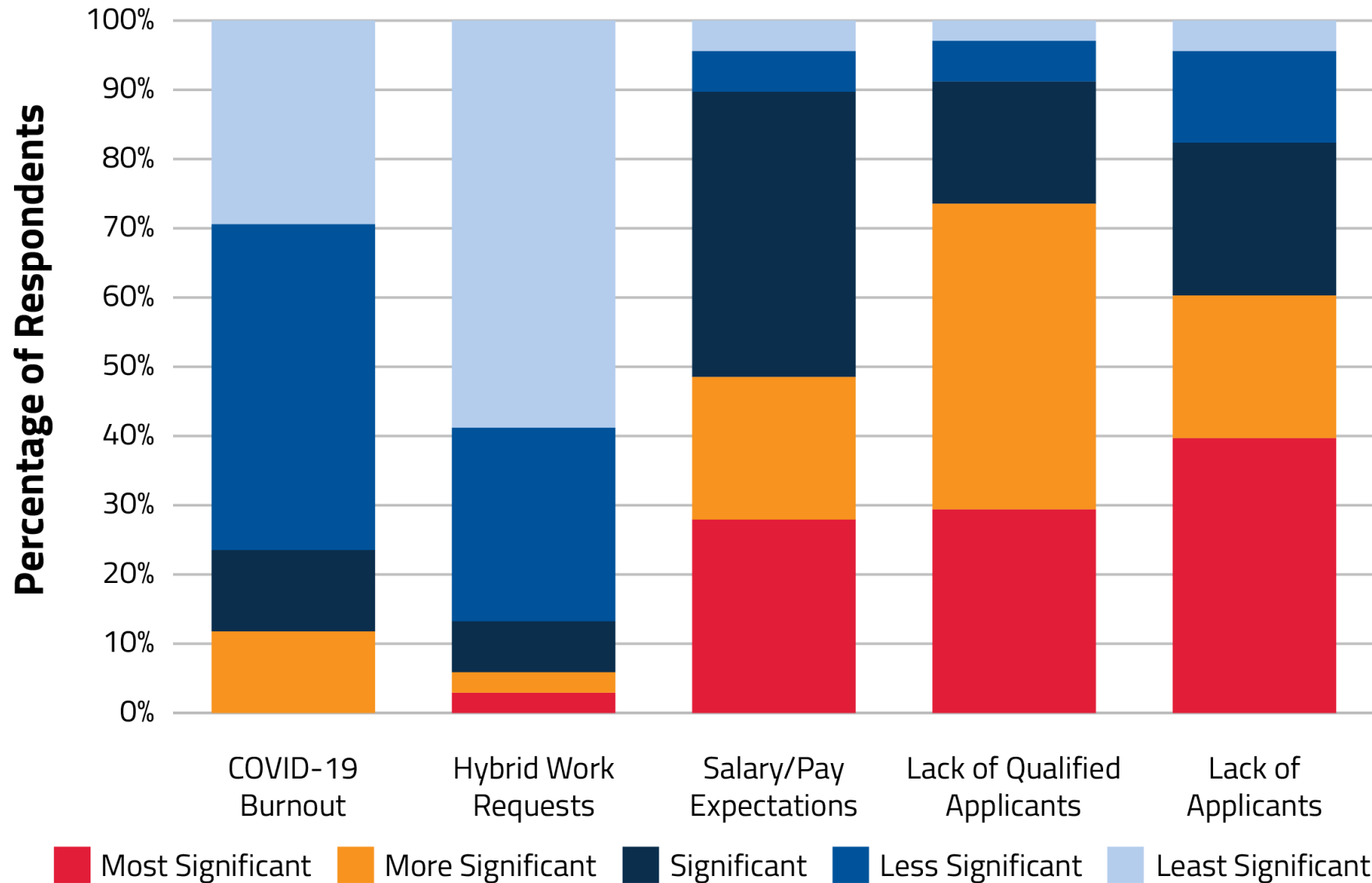
Of respondents reported clinical position vacancies lasting more than 45 days.

# Why are recruitment and retention so difficult?



# Significance of Obstacles to Behavioral Health Staff Recruitment & Retention

(As percentages of responses from 68 Ohio behavioral health agencies covering August to October 2021)



## *Key Findings: Workforce Shortage Causes*

# Lack of Professional Value

Many report feeling unrecognized as the critical health care workers they are. This feeds job stress, limits the workforce, and lengthens wait times for patients as a result.

*Key Findings: Workforce Shortage Causes*

# Pandemic Stress

Longer hours, higher caseloads, & tough questions at home related to life balance, childcare, etc.

## *Key Findings: Workforce Shortage Causes*

# **Insufficient Insurance Coverage/Reimbursement**

While many private insurance companies cover behavioral health, many do not cover a full range of services for acute and chronic care or do not recognize all available licensed professionals. This limits how easily providers can be reimbursed and contributes to wage stagnation.

## *Key Findings: Workforce Shortage Causes*

# **Excessive Professional Licensing Requirements**

State rules often require a person to have a master's degree to hold BH licensure, and earning potential is limited in the field below that level of education. The industry needs a clear career ladder, less costly points of entry, and career growth paths to increase the workforce and meet demand.

# Solutions

**Relief, Parity, Simplicity, and  
Administrative Reform**

# Fiscal Relief, Infrastructure Development

- Approve Ohio Medicaid's ARPA spending plan.
- Fund salary and cost-of-living incentives.
- Stipends to help practitioners make ends meet.
- Fund programs to educate, recruit, place, train, and retain behavioral health professionals.
- Highlight BH job opportunities.

# Enforce Existing Parity Requirements

- Educate the public about behavioral health insurance parity requirements.
- Increase oversight and enforcement of parity among commercial insurance plans.
- Incentivize insurers to directly reimburse at all licensure levels.



# Remove Administrative Barriers

- Expedite applications for licensed providers in good standing who are moving to Ohio.
- Create resources for providers that train students and new professionals.
- Reduce burdens in documentation and services requirements.

# New/Updated Reimbursement Models

- Implement the CCBHC model of care.
- Create reimbursement strategies to include alternative payment models that will:
  - *Support wages and benefits commensurate with education, experience, and levels of responsibility.*
  - *Align incentives and risk sharing.*
- Identify targeted reimbursement adjustments.

# Strengthen the Workforce Pipeline

- Develop BH career ladders with:
  - Training Programs
  - Professional Development
  - Continuing Education
  - Opportunities for licensure and certification at all levels of education (i.e. associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctorate)

# Governor DeWine – Ohio’s State of the State

## Mental Health Vision: Fulfilling a Decades Old Promise

“We must have the best, most robust behavioral health workforce in the country – a workforce that is hailed as heroic and valued as a vital part of our health system.”

-March 23, 2022

**Learn More:**

**[TheOhioCouncil.org/BreakingPoint](https://TheOhioCouncil.org/BreakingPoint)**

THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS???

## Contact Information

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