

At-A-Glance: Higher Education Mental Health Workforce Pilot Program

A High-Impact, Low-Cost Solution to Virginia's Student Mental Health & Workforce Needs

What This Pilot Does

Virginia's Higher Education Mental Health Workforce Pilot simultaneously expands **student access to mental health care** and helps build **Virginia's long-term licensed behavioral health workforce** – results that could be scaled significantly with increased state investment.

How it Works

Appropriated funds underwrite the salary and benefits of an onsite **LPC/LCSW candidate** at participating public universities for ~two years, the period needed to complete supervision requirements for licensure. Universities hire, train, and supervise candidates at their on-campus mental health care facilities, delivering immediate service capacity *until* licensed.

Fast Facts & Pilot Outcomes to Date

- Established by the General Assembly in 2022 with an additional round of pilot programs at flat funding for FY 2025 and FY 2026 (\$500,000 each FY).
- Awarded current competitive pilot grants to five public universities: **Christopher Newport, George Mason, James Madison, Longwood and Radford.**
- Administered by SCHEV in consultation with the Virginia Health Care Foundation.
- **Supported 13* LPC/LCSW candidates who have collectively to date:**
 - Served **1,687** students.
 - Completed **9,819** clinical hours.
 - Obtained **18,524** supervision hours.
- Hired within Virginia - **11 of the 13** candidates are Virginia residents & graduates of Virginia master's programs.
- Retained Virginia talent - **two** candidates permanently hired by their pilot institutions.
- Almost **doubled** the number of students served and clinical hours completed since December 2024.

*Note: Includes Round 1 candidate from Virginia Tech (VT exited program after first year to hire their candidate permanently). Four of the five current pilot sites have hired one candidate per round; Christopher Newport University matched a portion of the grant funds to support two candidates per round.

DID YOU KNOW? According to data from the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, **almost half (45%)** of recently-surveyed college students reported experiencing mental health challenges.

Why the Pilot Works

1. Expands Access Immediately

Pilot sites report:

- “**40+ additional clients per week**” now receiving counseling services at one institution.
- Students being seen **more quickly** and more consistently.
- Entire cohorts of students served who would have otherwise waited weeks or gone without care.

2. Strengthens Virginia’s Mental Health Workforce Pipeline

- Candidates complete nearly all supervised hours required for licensure.
- Universities produce fully-trained clinicians with connections to Virginia/Virginia public higher education institutions.
- Two institutions have already hired their candidates permanently.

3. Reduces Burnout & Stabilizes Campus Counseling Centers

Institutions cite:

- Reduced staff burnout.
- Improved crisis response.
- More sustainable caseloads.
- Expanded hours in some centers.

4. Demand Exceeds Funding

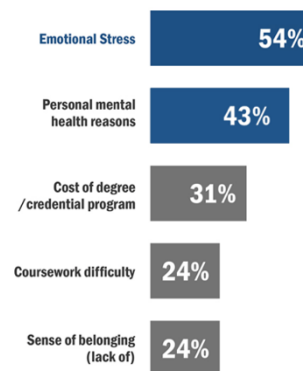
Applications far exceeded available funding:

- Received **10 applications** for the 2022 round.
- Received **9 applications** for the 2024 round.
- Funded **5 awards** (most recent round) due to limited appropriation.
- Institutions want to participate in this program because it **works**.

The Ongoing Need

- Virginia institutions continue to see rising student mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, ADHD, academic stress, and financial strain.
- The pilot institutions alone served **~9,400 students** since January 2025.
- The current maximum award—~\$100,000 per institution—is sufficient to support a candidate, but funding levels limit participation to five institutions.

Emotional stress and personal mental health are two of the top barriers to college enrollment and completion.



Source: The State of Higher Education, 2024

Bottom Line: The Mental Health Workforce Pilot is a proven, scalable and cost-effective solution helping Virginia meet urgent student mental health needs *and* build the licensed workforce our Commonwealth requires.