

# **Senate Bill 1547**

## **Expanding the Youth Behavioral Health Workforce**

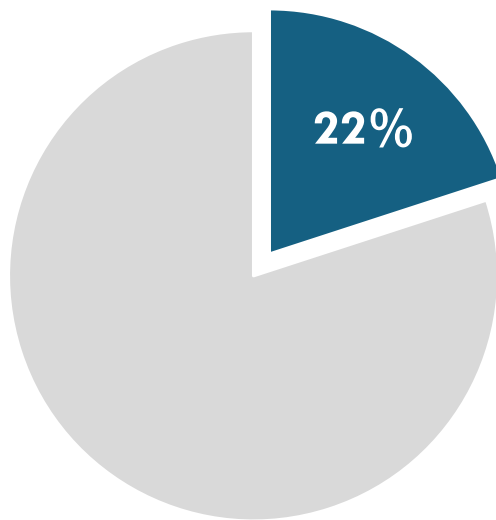
**Katie McLaughlin, Ph.D.**

Ballmer Institute for Children's Behavioral Health

University of Oregon

2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

# Oregon Youth Have High Rates of Behavioral Health Challenges



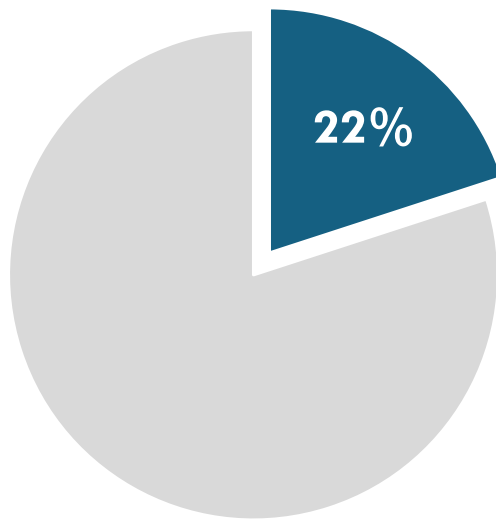
**Youth who  
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*Sources: Mental Health America, 2025: The State of Mental Health in America 2025; KFF analysis of 2024 National Survey of Children's Health*

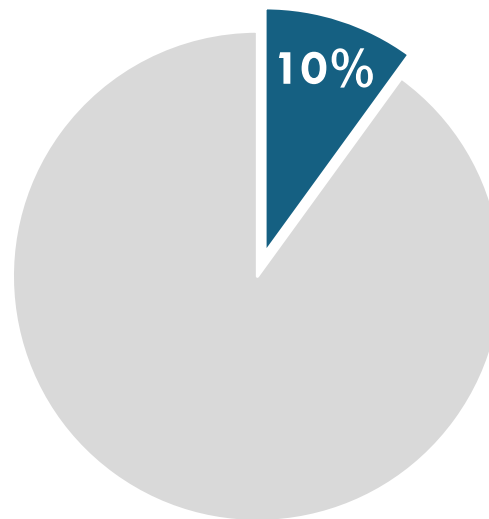
SENATE BILL 1547

OR 2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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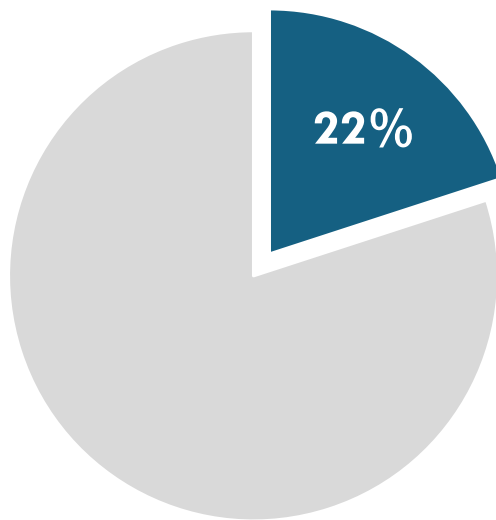
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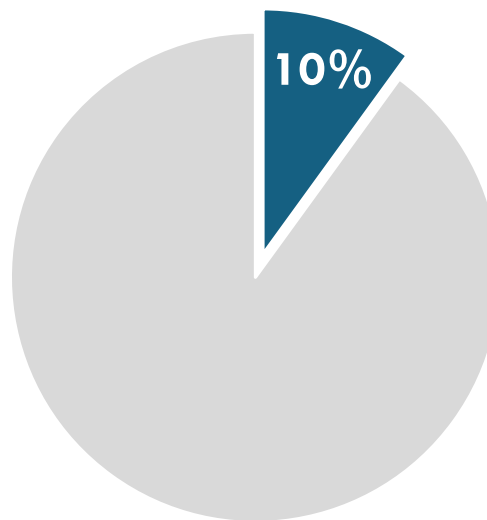
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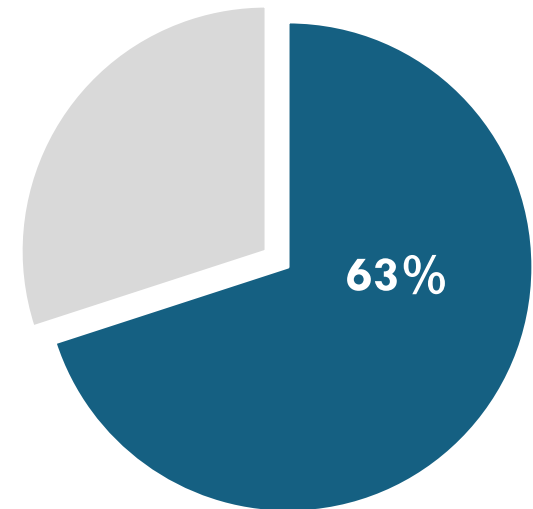
# Oregon Youth Have High Rates of Behavioral Health Challenges



**Youth who  
experienced severe  
depression**



**Youth who had a  
substance use disorder in  
the past year**



**Families who faced difficulties  
when trying to obtain youth  
mental health care**

Sources: Mental Health America, 2025: *The State of Mental Health in America 2025*; KFF analysis of 2024 National Survey of Children's Health

# The State of Youth Mental Health in Oregon (2025)

**47<sup>TH</sup>**

For youth  
depression

**47<sup>TH</sup>**

For youth substance  
use disorder

**39<sup>TH</sup>**

For overall youth  
mental health

Source: Mental Health America, 2025: The State of Mental Health in America 2025

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**HB 4151**

# **HB 4151 Legislative Recommendation**

## **Creation of a Licensed Behavioral Health & Wellness Practitioner**

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- Recommendation approved by the System of Care Advisory Council (SOCAC)

**Youth Behavioral Health Workforce  
Subcommittee**

Final Report to the System of Care Advisory Council

*Oregon Child and Family Center for Excellence*





# HB 4151 Legislative Recommendation

## Creation of a Licensed Behavioral Health & Wellness Practitioner

- Recommendation approved by the System of Care Advisory Council (SOCAC)
- Equity analysis conducted by SOCAC concluded that this new license type would have a **positive equity impact**

### Youth Behavioral Health Workforce Subcommittee

Final Report to the System of Care Advisory Council

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- Recommendation sent to legislature in December 2025

### Youth Behavioral Health Workforce Subcommittee

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# **New Behavioral Health License**

# Licensed Behavioral Health and Wellness Practitioner



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- **Scope of Practice:** Early identification, prevention and brief intervention services, skills training and support

# Licensed Behavioral Health and Wellness Practitioner



- **Scope of Practice:** Early identification, prevention and brief intervention services, skills training and support
- **Eligibility:** Graduates from *applied* bachelor's training programs that include at least **700 hours of supervised practice** in youth behavioral health services

- **No** diagnosis
- **No** cognitive or educational assessment
- **No** delivering psychotherapy
- **No** prescription or medication management
- **No independent practice**

## Practice Exclusions

- **No** diagnosis
  - **No** cognitive or educational assessment
  - **No** delivering psychotherapy
  - **No** prescription or medication management
  - **No independent practice**
- 
- Requires ongoing formal supervision from a licensed behavioral health provider at the master's or doctoral level

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# **Rationale for a New License**

# Identified Needs New License Addresses

- **More than half** of families who seek youth behavioral health services in Oregon report difficulty accessing care

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- There is a substantial need for both culturally responsive **services** and **a more diverse workforce**
- Need for a more **highly trained** entry-level workforce in behavioral health
- Need for more **prevention-oriented services** in settings where families can easily access care

## Why a New License?

- **Scope of practice** for new bachelor's-level license is **distinct** from existing professions and credentials

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- **Aligned with other states** that have implemented similar credentials

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# Who would Oversee the Credential?

# **Mental Health Regulatory Agency (MHRA)**

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- Ensures a well-established board of highly-trained behavioral health providers will oversee implementation and regulation of this new license
- Parallel license in other states (e.g., Nevada) is being overseen by the Board of Psychology

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**Support for this New  
License**







# SOCAC

System of Care Advisory Council



CHILDREN'S HEALTH *alliance*



# SOCAC

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**SOCAC**

System of Care Advisory Council





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**Children's  
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- Identify behavioral health challenges earlier and provide access to early interventions that will **prevent** problems from worsening over time
- Increase the **diversity** of the behavioral health workforce
- Provide a **new rung** in the continuum of behavioral health support roles

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# Questions and Feedback