



Vision Action Network

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Behavioral Health Workforce Summit launches dialogue on crisis in Washington County

Beaverton, Ore. - Vision Action Network (VAN) convened a virtual Behavioral Health Workforce Summit on Tuesday, March 29, with a diverse cross-section of stakeholders representing behavioral health, workforce development, government, community services, education, and faith in Washington County, Oregon.

Attracting nearly 90 participants, the summit was held in response to what has become a crisis in Washington County: an increased need for behavioral health supports throughout the community, but not enough qualified people to meet the demand, despite increased wages, sign-on bonuses, and other attempts to incentivize applicants.

Marcia Hille, CEO of Sequoia Mental Health Services, reported an increase in demand for outpatient therapy services as high as forty percent, but says “we’ve experienced more vacancies in that particular sector of our services than I’ve ever seen in the entire time I’ve been doing this work.”

Mental health and addiction services provider Lifeworks NW was recently forced to close two residential facilities due to staffing shortages.

“The impact on the community is huge,” said Julie Ibrahim, CEO of New Narrative Integrative Mental Health, “If we have to close these houses, these residents have to go somewhere, and often it’s shelters, motels, and unfortunately sometimes the street.”

With financial support from Washington County, the summit provided an opportunity to explore and brainstorm possible solutions to this crucial workforce shortage. VAN believes the ideas generated during the summit will be a springboard to action, and it is planning to reconvene key stakeholders in April.

“The behavioral health sector has been hit hard nationwide, and it began even before the pandemic, said Lifeworks NW CEO Mary Monnat. “Here in Washington County, Lifeworks NW’s employees are under tremendous strain to provide essential services to people who really need our help. We were pleased to have been a part of the Behavioral Health Workforce Summit, and we’re optimistic about the impact it will have moving forward.”

“The participants at the Summit demonstrated a clear commitment to shoring up the behavioral health system,” said Glenn Montgomery, VAN’s Executive Director. “As a convener, VAN hopes to bring the right people together to collaborate in ways that make a real difference in the lives of Washington County residents.”

Learn more about the summit and upcoming convenings on VAN’s website at www.visionactionnetwork.org.

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Vision Action Network is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that brings stakeholders together and promotes collaboration across all sectors to address critical issues and improve the lives of Washington County residents. As an independent, impartial convener, VAN helps build relationships, encourage dialogue, and inspire action. For more info, visit www.visionactionnetwork.org.