

Behavioral Health Support Specialist (BHSS) Sample Job Description

For the purpose of this job description, patient is equivalent to client, consumer, or person receiving professional behavioral health services.

Description

The BHSS is a member of the healthcare (crisis services, integrated care, specialty mental health, etc.) team working under the supervision of a person licensed to assess, diagnose, and treat mental and behavioral health conditions. The BHSS is responsible for coordinating and supporting the behavioral healthcare of patients with a specific role to provide brief treatment for mild-to-moderate symptoms of common mental health conditions, such as anxiety or depression. The BHSS maintains and tracks an active registry of patients, provides culturally responsive and evidence-informed interventions in a stepped care model, uses measurement-based care strategies to refer patients needing high-intensity psychotherapy, engages in case management, and facilitates referrals to clinic sanctioned services within the community. This provider will be credentialed to provide patient care through assessment, care management, consultation, referral, and follow-up care.

Job Duties

- Support the whole health of patients on an assigned caseload; participate in regularly scheduled caseload consultation to coordinate care with supervising providers, including medical providers, psychiatric consultants, and mental health care providers.
- Administer, score, and document patient symptoms using screening instruments for common mental health and substance use disorders.
- Use a registry to systematically track treatment response and monitor patients for changes in symptoms, side effects, or complications, document findings, and report to independently licensed providers.
- Document patient progress in EHR and other required systems to share with the care team.
- Present patient cases for consultation and participate in inter-professional dialog to inform diagnosis, treatment options, and care coordination.
- Participate in routine supervision and/or consultation; consultation will focus on new patients and those not improving as expected under the current treatment plan.
- Develop and maintain a supportive relationship with patients, including addressing issues and events that interfere with treatment.
- Engage in active and reflective listening.
- Demonstrate warmth, empathy, respect, and concern for others, while maintaining boundaries.
- Recognize and respect diversity, differences, and cultural traditions; demonstrate awareness and sensitivity to beliefs, values, and traditions in a patient's community, adapting services accordingly.
- Provide patients with education about common mental health and substance use disorders.



- Provide brief interventions that include goal setting, problem-solving, motivational enhancement, harm reduction, and patient activation strategies.
- Recognize behavioral health crises and warning signs; assess the level of risk for harm to self or others and report to supervisor and health care team.
- Understand stepped care approaches to managing common mental health problems that include measurement-based care and ongoing risk management appropriate to service protocols.
- Focus on social inclusion with patients, including return to work, physical activity, social engagement, and meaningful activities that promote health, wellness, and improved patient outcomes.
- Facilitate referrals for social and psychiatric services outside of clinic when appropriate based on setting, e.g., housing or legal assistance, food banks, vocational rehabilitation, higher education, substance use treatment, and specialty mental health care.
- Develop stay well plans and self-management plans with patients who have achieved their goals and are soon to end the current episode of care.
- Consult with organization staff to eliminate barriers to the efficient delivery of patient-centered care.
- Recognize professional limitations and scope of practice for role, referring patients to appropriate resources and high-intensity interventions as warranted.
- Maintain patient and clinic confidentiality, complying with laws, regulations, and organization policies to comply with HIPAA regulations and Federal Privacy Act; maintain security of all confidential information.

Requirements

- Bachelor's degree in psychology, social work, behavioral health care or a related degree from a program approved to deliver BHSS curriculum.
- Meet core competency requirements for a BHSS.
- Successful practicum experience in bachelor's degree program meeting requirements for a BHSS.
- Understanding of common mental health care conditions and symptom presentation.
- Experience screening and tracking common mental health and/or substance use disorders.
- Experience with assessment and treatment planning for common mental health and/or substance use disorders.
- Ability to deliver brief, structured interventions such as goal setting, problem-solving, motivational enhancement, harm reduction, and patient activation strategies.
- Ability to use standardized assessments to assess the need to refer for more intensive intervention.
- Ability to work in diverse, multicultural settings with a demonstrated commitment to non-discriminatory and equitable care.
- Demonstrated ability to collaborate effectively in an interprofessional team care setting.
- Maintain effective, professional relationships with patients and members of the care team.

- Ability to effectively communicate verbally and in writing.
- Strong organization and time management skills with ability to prioritize multiple tasks.
- Ability to work under pressure in a high-paced working environment.
- Computer proficiency, including Microsoft Office Suite.
- Comfort working in a high-paced and high-volume environment typical in health care settings.
- Ability to effectively engage patients in a supportive relationship.
- Ability to work with patients, individually or in groups, in-person, by telephone or video conferencing.
- Ability to document and maintain patient health records to support consultation/supervision.
- Working knowledge of community resources to help patients access support and services.
- Comply with legal, regulatory, and organizational policies.

Preferred

- Experience in settings where patient or client behavioral healthcare occurs, such as crisis centers, hospitals, integrated care settings, or specialty mental health settings.
- Proficiency with electronic health records (EHR) systems.
- Understanding of billing rules and regulations for reimbursement.
- Basic knowledge of psychopharmacology used for common mental health disorders.
- Working knowledge of state and county specialty mental health structure.

Certification and Licensure

Rules in progress to credential a Behavioral Health Support Specialist with the Washington State Department of Health per SSB 5189.