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## PSYCHIATRIC TECHNICIANS

**Los Angeles County**

MAY 2009



**CENTER OF EXCELLENCE**  
**Los Angeles County**

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**With a projected growth in new and replacement jobs of 27% between 2008 and 2013, Psychiatric Technicians are one of the fastest growing occupations in the health care industry in Los Angeles County and will provide 881 job openings during those years.**

**– Source: EMSI Covered Employment – Spring, 2009**

## **Executive Summary**

Mental health workers are essential to creating a healthy urban environment in the Los Angeles County community. Over the last two decades, some of the stigma of mental health problems has been reduced, as a result of the work of special commissions at the federal level, and of reports published in California. New treatment models also have emerged during this period that promise better success in treating mental illnesses. In California, Proposition 63 was passed in 2004 to fund new efforts to support mental health and implement the new treatment model.

Even though Psychiatric Technicians are the only licensed occupation in the mental health industry that does not require a graduate-level degree, they are the mental health professionals that have the most contact with the patient. They are in high demand and play a key role on the mental health team. The Psychiatric Technician is a specialized, more highly-trained vocational nurse who provides care to mentally disordered, emotionally disturbed, and/or developmentally disabled patients, usually in an institutional setting. Psychiatric Technicians work under the direction of other licensed mental health professionals.

Both labor market data and anecdotal reports from employers confirm an acute shortage of Psychiatric Technicians in Los Angeles County. This current shortage and the high number of vacant positions will make it even more difficult to meet the future need and fill the 881 job openings projected for the coming five years. With 169 job openings per year in Los Angeles County, the fewer than 50 Psychiatric Technician graduates coming out of the only local program do not begin to be able to fill the need.

As a licensed position in the State of California, training and education for Psychiatric Technicians consist of 1,530 hours of classroom and clinical practice. Licensed Vocational Nurses can become Psychiatric Technicians with some additional coursework and Psychiatric Technicians can go on to become registered nurses. Currently, Mt. San Antonio College has the only community college program in Los Angeles County for training Psychiatric Technicians.

Recommendations to address the issues presented in this report include:

- Develop an additional community college program for Psychiatric Technicians in Los Angeles County
- Replicate a “pipeline” project like the one the Mental Health America of Los Angeles has designed for Community Mental Health Workers for Psychiatric Technicians
- Increase diversity among students in Psychiatric Technician programs
- Add more “bridge” programs for LVNs to become Psychiatric Technicians and for Psychiatric Technicians to become Registered Nurses, and
- Use alternative educational formats, like online classes and programs, to attract more students to the field.

## Introduction

Mental health workers play an important role in urban environments like Los Angeles County, where they are an integral part of the public health system. An acute shortage of mental health workers in the public health system in Los Angeles County has prompted this report, which is prepared in response to the California Community Colleges' System charge to the Economic & Workforce Development (EWD) Network to identify industries and occupations with unmet workforce development needs and introduce partnering potential for the colleges' programs.

The 1999 Surgeon General's report on mental health care in the United States initiated a decade of attention to the mental health industry brought major shifts in treatment models and in the public's perception of the industry and its patients. That report indicated that about 20 percent of the American population experienced a diagnosable mental health condition each year although as few as one-third of them received the needed treatment. The report suggested that lack of financial support for mental health services, stigma associated with mental health problems, and lack of access to providers were reasons Americans did not seek help in greater numbers.<sup>1</sup>

A few years later, the 2001 President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health concluded:

"In addition to the tragedy of lost lives, mental illnesses come with a devastatingly high financial cost. In the U.S., the annual economic, indirect cost of mental illnesses is estimated to be \$79 billion. Most of that amount - approximately \$63 billion - reflects the loss of productivity as a result of illnesses. But indirect costs also include almost \$12 billion in mortality costs (lost productivity resulting from premature death) and almost \$4 billion in productivity losses for incarcerated individuals and for the time of those who provide family care."<sup>2</sup>

In 2004, Californians approved the Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63) which provided funding for new mental health programs and services by levying a special 1% tax on high-income tax payers. The Proposition also put a floor on state expenditures for Mental Health, guaranteeing that they could not fall below the 2004 funding level. At this time, over \$1 billion per year is available because of the proposition and counties are still gearing up to be able to administer the funds. Most of the California counties, including Los Angeles County, have applied to receive these funds.<sup>3</sup> Because the funds are only available for new programs, many existing mental health programs and services are still suffering serious funding problems.

<sup>1</sup> McRee T., Dower C., Briggance B., Vance J., Keane D., and O'Neil E., *The Mental Health Workforce: Who's Meeting California's Needs?*, San Francisco, CA: California Workforce Initiative at the UCSF Center for the Health Professions. February 2003, found online at [http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf\\_files/MH-report.pdf](http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf_files/MH-report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, *Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America*, Final Report to the President: Full Version: 2003, found online at <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov/reports/Finalreport/FullReport.htm>

<sup>3</sup> California Healthcare Foundation, *Mental Health Check-Up on Proposition 63*, found online at <http://www.healthvote.org/index.php/checkup/C26/#2>

## Industry Overview

### Mental Health Care Industry

The mental health care industry includes a wide range of occupations from social work to psychiatry. Although 40% of all mental health care is provided by health care physicians, there are many occupations that are specific to the mental health industry. These can be organized in a number of ways, but when considered functionally they include: counseling professions, licensed clinical social work professions, psychologists, psychiatrists, advanced practice psychiatric and mental health nurses, and psychiatric technicians and other allied health personnel.

The industry can also be divided more broadly into mental health occupations and behavioral health occupations. Generally, “mental health” refers to conditions or care associated with defined psychological or psychiatric illness and “behavioral health” refers to complementary or supportive counseling or educational services provided to promote wellness or patient self-care. Often, however, the terms “mental health” and “behavioral health” are used interchangeably or not clearly distinguished.<sup>4</sup>

Mental health services are often misunderstood by the general public and stigmatized or stereotyped. With no one area or occupation dominating the industry, services have been offered unsystematically. Despite efforts to integrate mental health services with physical health care, the two areas have remained separate and subject to varying degrees of regulation and oversight.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of the President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health report, “Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America,” the mental health system in Los Angeles County (and throughout California) has been in a transformational mode for the past five years. The system is shifting to a “recovery” model in which the patient and family members are empowered to make many of the treatment decisions.

“To achieve the promise of community living for everyone, new service delivery patterns and incentives must ensure that every American has easy and continuous access to the most current treatments and best support services. Advances in research, technology, and our understanding of how to treat mental illnesses provide powerful means to transform the system. In a transformed system, consumers and family members will have access to timely and accurate information that promotes learning, self-monitoring, and accountability. Health care providers will rely on up-to-date knowledge to provide optimum care for the best outcomes.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> McRee T., Dower C., Briggance B., Vance J., Keane D., and O’Neil E., *The Mental Health Workforce: Who’s Meeting California’s Needs?*, San Francisco, CA: California Workforce Initiative at the UCSF Center for the Health Professions. February 2003, pp. iii-vii and p. 2, found online at [http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf\\_files/MH-report.pdf](http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf_files/MH-report.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> McRee T., Dower C., Briggance B., Vance J., Keane D., and O’Neil E., *The Mental Health Workforce: Who’s Meeting California’s Needs?*, San Francisco, CA: California Workforce Initiative at the UCSF Center for the Health Professions. February 2003, found online at [http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf\\_files/MH-report.pdf](http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf_files/MH-report.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, *Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America, Final Report to the President: Executive Summary: 2003*, p. 6 found online at <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov/reports/FinalReport/downloads/ExecSummary.pdf>

## Mental Health Industry Growth

As with other health care industries, the demand for services in the mental health industry has created acute shortages in selected occupations. These shortages are projected to continue into the next decade. The causes of this growing demand include:

- The aging population, which will increase demand for mental and behavioral health providers as the incidence of dementia and disease-related mental impairment increases in the elderly
- Enhanced pharmaceutical treatment of mental health conditions and lessening stigma associated with obtaining treatment for mental health conditions, which may increase the patient population using these services<sup>7</sup>
- Resolution of the fragmentation of financing and service provision that has existed in the industry. The Surgeon General has stated that if full provision of services was available to people, the demand for skilled workers in this industry would be even greater. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999).<sup>8</sup>
- A pay differential between facilities managed by the Department of Mental Health and the state's correctional facilities has resulted in an exodus of employees from the mental hospitals, leaving them understaffed. A 2007 class action suit filed by the families of patients in those facilities brought the situation to the public's attention and some raises were given, but there is still not parity between the institutions. Though the overall demand is not affected by this, the shortage of mental health workers in non-correctional settings is significantly heightened by this problem.<sup>9</sup>

California's licensed mental and behavioral health care workforce, which numbered 63,000 in 2003, is made up of marriage and family therapists (37%), licensed clinical social workers (22%), psychologists (18%), psychiatric technicians (15%), psychiatrists (8%), and advanced practice nurses in psychiatric or mental health (1%) (numbers in parentheses refer to percent representation within the mental and behavioral health care workforce). Twenty-four percent of these workers are employed in Los Angeles County. The statewide workforce is expected to grow to 80,000 by 2010.<sup>10</sup>

## Mental Health Industry Occupations for Community College Students

In the current economic recession, health care is seen as a stable industry and many displaced workers from other industries are looking for short-term training programs that will give them an entry point to a new career. Psychiatric Technicians can be trained in community college programs and are the only licensed occupation in the mental health industry that do not require

<sup>7</sup> McRee T., Dower C., Briggance B., Vance J., Keane D., and O'Neil E., *The Mental Health Workforce: Who's Meeting California's Needs?*, San Francisco, CA: California Workforce Initiative at the UCSF Center for the Health Professions. February 2003, found online at [http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf\\_files/MH-report.pdf](http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf_files/MH-report.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> McRee T., Dower C., Briggance B., Vance J., Keane D., and O'Neil E., *The Mental Health Workforce: Who's Meeting California's Needs?*, San Francisco, CA: California Workforce Initiative at the UCSF Center for the Health Professions. February 2003, found online at [http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf\\_files/MH-report.pdf](http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf_files/MH-report.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Romney, Lee and Gold, Scott, "Judge Wants Better State Plan to Solve Staffing Shortage at State Mental Hospitals," *Los Angeles Times*, April 24, 2007, found online at <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/apr/24/local/mental24>

<sup>10</sup> McRee T., Dower C., Briggance B., Vance J., Keane D., and O'Neil E., *The Mental Health Workforce: Who's Meeting California's Needs?*, San Francisco, CA: California Workforce Initiative at the UCSF Center for the Health Professions. February 2003, p. ii, found online at [http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf\\_files/MH-report.pdf](http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf_files/MH-report.pdf)

a graduate-level degree.<sup>11</sup> This study focuses on demand and opportunities for Psychiatric Technicians because of the acute need for workers in this occupation in Los Angeles County.

There are also many unlicensed health care occupations in the mental health industry that students in community colleges may consider. These occupations are focused more on the social work side of the industry. Some of the job titles of these jobs include community health worker, drug and alcohol abuse counselor, occupational therapy assistant, and mental health worker. Existing programs for these occupations in Los Angeles County are shown in Appendix B. Emerging occupations of possible interest to community colleges are discussed later in this report.

### **Industry Locations and Settings**

Many of the mental health industry's employees are found in private and government-run hospitals or institutional settings. This is especially true for Psychiatric Technicians and Aides, who are charged with carrying out the orders of psychiatrists.

The main settings in which Psychiatric Technicians work include:<sup>12</sup>

- Adult residential facilities, residential treatment programs and psychiatric treatment facilities
- Acute psychiatric units
- Psychiatric crisis units, psychiatric assessment centers and psychiatric emergency teams
- Institutes for mental disease
- State hospitals, state developmental centers, and state adult and juvenile prisons
- Long-term care facilities and intermediate care facilities
- Substance abuse programs
- Outpatient mental health clinics, day treatment programs and home health care
- County jails
- Social rehabilitation facilities and residential care homes
- Secured geriatric facilities
- Special school programs

In Los Angeles County, the largest mental health institution, public or private, is the Los Angeles County Jail. (This is also the largest mental health institution in the country.) This is a long-term result of the shutdown in the 1970's of the large psychiatric inpatient facilities. When those facilities were closed, many people with mental health problems ended up on the streets. There,

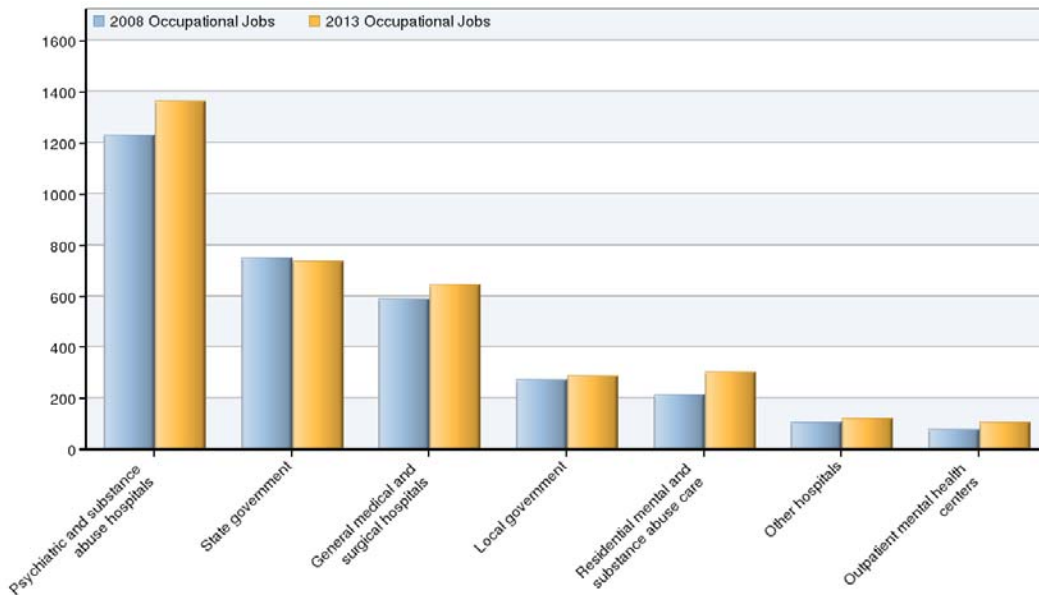
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<sup>11</sup> McRee T., Dower C., Briggance B., Vance J., Keane D., and O'Neil E., *The Mental Health Workforce: Who's Meeting California's Needs?*, San Francisco, CA: California Workforce Initiative at the UCSF Center for the Health Professions. February 2003, p. 4, found online at [http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf\\_files/MH-report.pdf](http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf_files/MH-report.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Hearn, Keith, "Highlights of the History of Psychiatric Technicians in California," February 21, 2006 found online at <http://psychtechs.net/pages/indexes.cgi?idxcatid=35&idxid=8283>

they often engaged in criminal activities and were placed in jail for everything from homicide to urinating on the street. There are 1,400 mentally-ill inmates at the Los Angeles County jail.<sup>13</sup>

**Exhibit 1- Industry Locations for Psychiatric Technicians in Los Angeles County**



Source: EMSI Covered Employment – Spring 2009

**Table 1 – Industry Location of Psychiatric Technicians and Aides in Los Angeles County**

NAICS Code	Type	2008 Jobs	2013 Jobs	Change	% Change
622210	Psychiatric and substance abuse hospitals	1,230	1,363	133	11%
920000	State government	751	737	-14	-2%
622110	General medical and surgical hospitals	590	647	57	10%
930000	Local government	271	285	14	5%
623220	Residential mental and substance abuse care	211	302	91	43%
622310	Other hospitals	104	120	16	15%
621420	Outpatient mental health	76	103	27	35%
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,233</b>	<b>3,557</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>10%</b>

Source: EMSI Covered Employment – Spring 2009

<sup>13</sup> Montagne, Rene, "Inside the Nation's Largest Mental Institution," National Public Radio Morning Edition, August 14, 2008, heard online at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93581736>

As indicated in Table 1, the greatest increase in number of Psychiatric Technician positions (133) is expected to be in inpatient, institutional settings including Psychiatric and Substance Abuse Hospitals and the greatest percentage increase in positions will be in Residential Mental and Substance Abuse Care facilities (43%).

## Occupational Overview

### Psychiatric Technicians

Psychiatric Technicians are the members of a mental health care team led by a social worker, psychologist, or psychiatrist who spend the most time in direct contact with the client/patient. The purpose of this team is to rehabilitate clients/patients so they can return to the community.

The Psychiatric Technician is a specialized, more highly-trained vocational nurse who provides care to mentally disordered, emotionally disturbed, and/or developmentally disabled patients, usually in an institutional setting. The Psychiatric Technician helps patients with their personal hygiene, administers oral and hypodermic medications, measures the patient's general physical condition (by taking pulse, temperature, respiration), observes the patient to detect behavior patterns, intervenes to restrain violent or potentially violent or suicidal patients, leads therapy group sessions, completes various paperwork and records, and issues medications from dispensary and maintains associated records. Although the Psychiatric Technician usually works under the direction of one of the mental health specialists, he/she is qualified to work independently, exercising judgment, and seeking specialized technician and professional assistance when necessary.<sup>14</sup>

Critical issues for the profession include excessive overtime, as psychiatric technicians are not covered by restrictions on overtime for nurse staffing. John Gardner, Director of the Psychiatric Technician program at Mt. San Antonio College is often told by his graduates about the high pay they are earning because of the large amount of overtime they work.<sup>15</sup>

“Although staff shortages affect all levels of professionals, including psychiatrists, social workers, and psychologists, the problem is especially daunting for mental health workers whose jobs do not require advanced degrees, for example case managers, frontline hospital staff, community treatment workers, and mental health technicians. Openings for these critical positions remain vacant for long stretches of time, shifting the burden of care to staff members who may already be stretched thin in terms of their hours and responsibilities or to temporary staff. Once filled, these jobs often turn over quickly due to stress, burnout, poor compensation, and a lack of opportunity for advancement.”<sup>16</sup>

Other professional development concerns include preparing Psychiatric Technicians to deal with larger proportions of forensic clients in correctional settings.<sup>17</sup> In Los Angeles County, a major effort is underway to prepare Psychiatric Technicians for work in the correctional system. As in

<sup>14</sup> Mt. San Antonio College Technology and Health Division, “Psychiatric Technician Program,” found online at <http://elearn.mtsac.edu/jgardner/ptpacket.htm>

<sup>15</sup> Interview with John Gardner, Director, Psychiatric Technician Program, Mt. San Antonio College

<sup>16</sup> Kadis, Jessica, “Workforce Planning: How to Recruit and Retain Mental Health Workers”, Community Living Exchange Collaboration, Community Living Briefs, Volume 2 Issue 1, p.1 found online at <http://www.bcm.edu/ilru/html/publications/newsletters/Briefs/Vol2Iss1.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> McRee T., Dower C., Briggance B., Vance J., Keane D., and O’Neil E., *The Mental Health Workforce: Who’s Meeting California’s Needs?*, San Francisco, CA: California Workforce Initiative at the UCSF Center for the Health Professions. February 2003, found online at [http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf\\_files/MH-report.pdf](http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf_files/MH-report.pdf)

other parts of the state, Psychiatric Technicians in Los Angeles County who work in the jail receive a pay differential which allows them to earn more than their counterparts in other parts of the system, so these jobs are very attractive but special training is required to qualify.<sup>18</sup>

### Unlicensed Psychiatric Aides

The Psychiatric Aide or Assistant helps with a limited number of tasks that might be assigned to the higher-level Psychiatric Technician, including: assisting patients with grooming; serving meals and feeding patients; assisting patients in becoming adjusted to hospital routine; accompanying patients to medical and dental treatments and to recreational activities; encouraging patients to participate in social, educational, and recreational activities; maintaining records of patients' activities, such as vital signs, eating habits, and daily behavior; measuring vital signs and collecting specimens; monitoring patients to ensure patients remain in assigned areas; and aiding or restraining patients to prevent injuries.<sup>19</sup>

Psychiatric Technician Aides or Assistants require a valid Certified Nurse Assistant Certificate. Nurse Assistant certification requires successful completion of a state-approved program; 100 hours of supervised clinical training; 50 hours of classroom training; a passing score on the written federal exam; and a criminal background check. There are 71 state-approved programs in Los Angeles County which are housed at high schools, adult learning centers, and ROP programs.<sup>20</sup> Psychiatric Aides' or Assistants' occupations can be the entry points to the career ladder that includes Psychiatric Technicians, gaining valuable experience on-the-job that will help them get an entry-level position after they become licensed Psychiatric Technicians.

### Employment Growth

A 2003 report by the California Workforce Initiative reported, "Psychiatric technicians currently comprise 15 percent of licensed mental health care workers in the state. The psychiatric technician workforce is growing far above expectations. The estimation of job growth for psychiatric technicians in California...has far outpaced projections, and with the development of new training programs will likely continue to do so.... There is preliminary evidence that institutions may be using them as substitutes for other workers but there is little known about practice patterns and successful practice models." The report went on to predict, "The mental health care workforce also may not look as it has in the past: training, licensure, insurance reimbursement policies, prescribing privileges and other professional issues have already begun to affect the type of professional who provides care and the relative rate at which new workers enter each profession."<sup>21</sup>

With a projected growth in new and replacement jobs of 27% over the five-year period from 2008-2013, Psychiatric Technicians are one of the fastest growing occupations in the health care industry in Los Angeles County.

<sup>18</sup> Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, "Join our jail mental health services team today!" online at [http://dmh.lacounty.gov/join\\_us.html](http://dmh.lacounty.gov/join_us.html)

<sup>19</sup> Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information – Psychiatric Aides, found online at <http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occguides/psychaide.htm>

<sup>20</sup> California Department of Education, Certified Nursing Assistant Programs, found online at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ct/rp/cna.asp#L>

<sup>21</sup> McRee T., Dower C., Briggance B., Vance J., Keane D., and O'Neil E., *The Mental Health Workforce: Who's Meeting California's Needs?*, San Francisco, CA: California Workforce Initiative at the UCSF Center for the Health Professions. February 2003, found online at [http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf\\_files/MH-report.pdf](http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf_files/MH-report.pdf)

**Table 2 – Projected Growth for Selected Occupations in Los Angeles County**

SOC Code	Description	2008 Jobs	2013 Jobs	Change	% Change	New & Rep. Jobs	% New & Rep.	2009 Median Hourly Earnings
29-2053	Psychiatric technicians	3,214	3,541	327	10%	881	27%	\$20.36
31-1013	Psychiatric aides*	324	347	23	7%	38	12%	\$12.48

Source: EMSI Covered Employment – Spring 2009

\*This is an unlicensed position

The true demand for Psychiatric Technicians is even more critical than it appears because of the shortage of beds for mental health patients. There are currently 17.5 public, inpatient beds for every 100,000 California citizens. The minimum acceptable ratio is 50 beds per 100,000. If the number of beds was increased to the minimum acceptable ratio, the demand for Psychiatric Technicians would probably triple, since they are essential to inpatient care.<sup>22</sup>

**Career Ladder**

Although the extensive training program and state licensure make it difficult for other health care workers to become Psychiatric Technicians without going to school full-time, the California Association of Psychiatric Technicians (CAPT), which is also the bargaining unit for Technicians in public positions, has identified a career ladder. This includes Psychiatric Technician Training Candidate, Psychiatric Technician Student, Psychiatric Technician Apprentice and Psychiatric Technician Assistant through Senior Psychiatric Technician. This career ladder extends beyond the bargaining unit through supervisory and managerial positions.<sup>23</sup>

Because of the similarity in training, the Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) is the occupation most likely to provide entry to Psychiatric Technicians. A number of community colleges throughout the state provide programs to upgrade LVNs to Psychiatric Technicians. Psychiatric Technicians can also use their training as the foundation for a career as a registered nurse and/or a psychiatric nurse. Community college programs to support both of these career ladder moves are provided in Appendix B.

In Los Angeles County employment, Psychiatric Technicians have the opportunity to move up through three levels of jobs: Psychiatric Technician I, II, and III. These levels coordinate with years of experience and offer higher levels of responsibility. The Los Angeles County Department of Health Services hires only level II and above.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Treatment Advocacy Center, “Severe Shortage of Psychiatric Treatment Beds Sounds Alarm Bell,” found online at [http://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/storage/tac/documents/the\\_shortage\\_of\\_publichospital\\_beds.pdf](http://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/storage/tac/documents/the_shortage_of_publichospital_beds.pdf) and <http://www.psychclaws.org/GeneralResources/Fact3.htm>

<sup>23</sup> California Association of Psychiatric Technicians, “Bargaining Unit 18 Contract Agreement, Article 2, Psychiatric Technician Provisions,” found online at <http://www.dpa.ca.gov/bargaining/contracts/html/bu18-19990701-20010702/Unit18Contract99-02.htm>

<sup>24</sup> Los Angeles County Class Specifications found online at <http://dhrdcap.co.la.ca.us/classspec/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.listAll>

## Emerging Jobs

The Los Angeles County Mental Health Department Workforce Education and Training (WET) Plan identifies a number of new occupations for which the community colleges could train students. These include: vocational rehabilitators, community advocates (culturally/ethnically specific), faith counselors, “life experience counselors”, autism/Aspergers specialists, and prevention/intervention specialists. In addition, three new occupations are anticipated to work with children: youth service coordinators, education advisors/advocates, and trainers in drama, art therapy, sports, and media. These occupations are not defined as such by the Department of Labor or the Employment Development Department. More research is needed to create labor market data, projections, and define the training and education needs for these emerging occupations. However, it is interesting to note that the California Institute for Mental health emphasizes the importance of “cultural competency,” defined as “The ability to understand me within the context of my culture, language, history, gender, sexual orientation, what mental health means to my culture, generation, ethnicity, biculturalism, etc. without judgment.” The need to increase diversity and cultural competence within the workforce is particularly important in the healthcare industry.<sup>25</sup>

## Licensure

The Psychiatric Technician profession as part of the mental health treatment team began to gain recognition in 1950 when the California Society of Psychiatric Technicians was formed. This organization pioneered the creation of the state civil service job classification with specific entry requirements. The certification system was established in California in 1959 for public and private sector employees.

In 1970, certification was elevated to full state licensure like that for other healthcare disciplines. California is one of only four states that license Psychiatric Technicians. The California Association of Psychiatric Technicians (CAPT) was formed in 1985 to raise the professional status of the occupation and to serve as the bargaining agent for state employees in the occupation. Subsequently, this organization became the professional organization for Psychiatric Technicians in the private sector as well.<sup>26</sup>

Today, Psychiatric Technician is a state-licensed nursing discipline focusing on the care of people with mental illnesses and/or developmental disabilities (such as mental retardation, autism, epilepsy and cerebral palsy). The license category is parallel to Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) and licensing is provided by the California Department of Health, Board of Vocational Nursing and Psychiatric Technicians (BVNPT).<sup>27</sup> Psychiatric Technicians have more education and training in mental and developmental disabilities while LVNs have additional

<sup>25</sup> County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, Mental Health Services Act Workforce Education and Training Plan, Fiscal Year 2006-07 to 2008-9, Attachment H, p. 2 found online at <http://cmhda.org/go/Portals/0/CMHDA%20Files/MHSA/WET%20County%20Tools/Los%20Angeles%20Submitted%20to%20State%20DMH.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Hearn, Keith, “Highlights of the History of Psychiatric Technicians in California,” February 21, 2006 found online at <http://psychtechs.net/pages/indexes.cgi?idxcatid=35&idxid=8283>

<sup>27</sup> State of California, Bureau of Vocational Nurses and Psychiatric Technicians, found online at <http://www.bvnpt.ca.gov/>

training in obstetrics/gynecology and pediatrics. The scope of practice of Psychiatric Technicians is also broader than that of LVNs. <sup>28</sup>

California licenses are renewed every two years. In Los Angeles County, there is one licensed provider of Continuing Education, which is the Center for Aging Resources in Pasadena. Continuing Education units can also be earned through online programs provided by licensed providers in other geographical areas.

There are both licensed and unlicensed occupations currently represented by CAPT:

**Table 3- Licensed and Unlicensed Occupations Represented by CAPT<sup>29</sup>**

Licensed Positions	Unlicensed Positions
Psychiatric Technician*	Pre-Licensed Psychiatric Technician*
Senior Psychiatric Technician*	Psychiatric Technician Assistant*
Psychiatric Technician Instructor	Psychiatric Technician Apprentice
Developmental Specialist*	Psychiatric Technician Trainee*
Child Care Practitioner	Psychiatric Technician Student
	Psychiatric Technician Training Candidate

\* Classes with a parallel class designated as "Safety"

The American Association of Psychiatric Technicians is a non-profit organization that administers a voluntary certification examination of basic psychiatric technology. This exam is primarily taken by employees in the 46 states that do not license Psychiatric Technicians. After being nationally certified, individuals can put the initials NCPT after their names (Nationally Certified Psychiatric Technician.)

### Employer Needs and Challenges

The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health is engaged in a multi-year project as a result of Proposition 63 to develop a Workforce Education and Training (WET) plan to fund new programs in the County with Proposition 63 funds. This plan includes analysis of workforce data and extensive surveying of public and private (sub-contractor) providers of mental health services. The data analysis, focus groups, and provider surveys conducted for the WET plan provided valuable data and input to this environmental scan of Psychiatric Technicians. Here are some of the findings of the WET Plan needs assessment that indicate the unmet demand for Psychiatric Technicians in the County:

- There are 73 authorized positions for Psychiatric Technicians in the County (this includes employees and independent contractors) and these were deemed “hard to fill.”<sup>30</sup> At this time, 41 of these positions are filled. (See report of survey from Susan Moser that follows.)

<sup>28</sup> Hearn, Keith, “Highlights of the History of Psychiatric Technicians in California,” February 21, 2006 found online at <http://psychtechs.net/pages/indexes.cgi?idxcatid=35&idxid=8283>

<sup>29</sup> “State of California Job Classifications Represented by CAPT” found online at <http://psychtechs.net/page/?page=18>

- There are 54 Psychiatric Technician positions among Community-Based Organizations, their sub-contractors, and network providers. These were also deemed “hard to fill” and the plan identified a need for 50 more Psychiatric Technicians in this group in order to meet the need.<sup>31</sup>

Some inpatient mental health services provided by the County are managed through the Department of Health Services and therefore are not included in these findings. When a patient who has been hospitalized for medical care also needs mental health services, those services are managed by the Department of Health Services. The division of services between the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Health Services has a corresponding division of treatment mode. The Department of Mental Health focuses more on the social work side and the Department of Health Services focuses more on a medical model. This is evidenced in the WET plan by the fact that the Community Mental Health Worker program at Cerritos College is part of the external inventory, but the Psychiatric Technician program at Mt. San Antonio College is not mentioned, even though students from that program do clinical practice at the County Department of Mental Health.

Two people who are involved with the development of the WET plan were interviewed for this study. Both interviews focused on the role and potential partnerships with community colleges. The first interview was with Sabine Whipple, who is Project Director - Regional Partnerships for the California Institute for Mental Health (CIMH). Whipple discussed the need for curriculum that lays the groundwork for transferring and moving up a career ladder. She also emphasized the importance of work experience and internships. Furthermore, she suggested the possibility of paying stipends (from Prop 63 funds) to mental health employees who go back and retrain. Whipple also stated a need for online classes and evening classes, for working students. Although hiring is down at this time because of the downturn in the economy, there are many retirements expected in the next few years that will open positions and build demand again.

Angelita Diaz-Akahori is the coordinator for the L.A. County Department of Mental Health WET plan. She explained that the WET Plan has not yet been approved by the State but is being reworked at this time. She discussed lower paying occupations, like community workers, whose incumbents could be retrained to become Psychiatric Technicians. This would be highly beneficial because they would come into their jobs with experience, which is a requirement for entry-level county positions. The most important component of Psychiatric Technician programs at community colleges (current programs or those that are developed in the future) is inclusion of the recovery model throughout the program. If students do not understand this model, they will not be able to work in the system.

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<sup>30</sup> County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, Mental Health Services Act, Workforce Education and Training Plan, Fiscal Year 2006-07 to 2008-9, Exhibit 3, p.9 found online at <http://cmhda.org/go/Portals/0/CMHDA%20Files/MHSA/WET%20County%20Tools/Los%20Angeles%20Submitted%20to%20State%20DMH.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, Mental Health Services Act, Workforce Education and Training Plan, Fiscal Year 2006-07 to 2008-9, Exhibit 3, p.9 found online at <http://cmhda.org/go/Portals/0/CMHDA%20Files/MHSA/WET%20County%20Tools/Los%20Angeles%20Submitted%20to%20State%20DMH.pdf>

Susan Moser, Departmental Human Resources Manager for the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, stated that the Department directly employed about 41 Psychiatric Technicians. (Much of the service provided by the County to the community is through private organizations who are contractors with the County and is not included in Ms. Moser's job count.) The Department has 5 to 10 openings for Psychiatric Technicians on an ongoing basis. It is "difficult" to find inexperienced job candidates for these positions and "very difficult" to find experienced candidates. The Department requires one year of work experience for all job candidates. Students from the Mt. San Antonio College Psychiatric Technician program do rotations at the Department, but Moser feels there are not enough programs to meet their needs. She commented that "Psychiatric Technicians are a critical part of the multi-disciplinary mental health teams. Their function helps free up time for the advanced degree therapist. Their ability to administer medications and manage assaultive behavior is invaluable and much less costly than paying for a Registered Nurse."

Several other representatives of key agencies/organizations were also interviewed for this report. For the Department of Health Services, Tobey Moree, Interim Chief of the Recruitment and Examination Division, was interviewed. Representing the Los Angeles County Jail was Denise Scates, Mental Health Clinical District Chief. T.J. Hill, Mental Health Policy Director, Association of Community Human Service Agencies (ACHSA), which represents all of the private non-profit organizations that provide contracted services to the County, also participated in an interview. One issue that was discussed in these interviews is the difference between budgeted and filled positions. Especially in the public agencies, there can be a large difference between the approved positions that are on the books and the number of those that are filled. Sometimes this is a supply/demand issue when qualified job candidates cannot be found. (The County requires one year of experience for all incoming Psychiatric Technicians, plus a security clearance to work at the County Jail.) But sometimes the positions are filled with Certified Nursing Assistants or Nursing Attendants. This may be done because there is a larger supply of candidates in those occupations. Sometimes jobs are just left unfilled because the position is not needed at this time or to create "salary savings." These interviewees did not express the level of need for Psychiatric Technicians that Susan Moser indicated at the County Department of Mental Health.

Surveys of other Los Angeles County employers provided input similar to that from the County Department of Mental Health. Most supported the development of new, additional community college programs for Psychiatric Technicians in the county. They emphasized the need for students to come into the mental health field with experience, which they can get as volunteers or as unlicensed workers. They also look for job candidates who have experience with the Department of Mental Health's documentation, charting, and billing systems. They underscored the WET plan's emphasis on finding employees who are bilingual and bicultural.

## **Community Support and Resources**

Significant community support and opportunities for partnering are available to the community colleges during this time when the WET plan is being developed by the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. The primary goal of the plan is to support the transformation of the industry to the new "recovery" model instead of the "medical" model that was the industry standard before. The recovery model incorporates a large number of peer, family, and "recovered" personnel, all of whom will need training for their new roles. Some of this training is already being provided by community-based organizations who are sub-contractors to the

County Department of Mental Health. The Department is interested in partnering with community colleges, but the lines of coordination have not been established. For example, only one community college representative sits on the large board of collaborating organizations that are overseeing the development of the WET plan.

The Mental Health of America of Los Angeles (MHALA) organization has been active in designing pipeline programs and specialized training to support the new service model in Los Angeles. The Mental Health Pipeline project starts with a career pathway program at Crenshaw High School or Huntington Park High School. Students start by working with reading partners to increase their literacy skills. The pipeline project is also working with Crenshaw High School, through funding from the Urban League and California Endowment, to develop a Regional Occupational Program (ROP). At Cerritos College, students can move into the Mental Health Worker Program, and other students who have not needed the support of the pipeline academy can also join the program. Finally, the Human Services program at California State University - Dominguez Hills is open to pipeline transfer students. Although the pipeline provides a coordinated approach for students, building the skills and knowledge they need at each level, the various programs at the colleges and university are also open to students who have not completed the steps of the pipeline (and even to students who already hold a B.A.) See <http://www.csudh.edu/hhs/hd/csd/default.htm> for more information.<sup>32</sup>

MHALA also supports a Spanish Immersion Program at College of the Canyons for County Mental Health employees, by paying the salary of the instructor, and the cost of the program for participants. Participants who test out receive a bilingual bonus each year.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to providing clinical experience for Psychiatric Technician students from Mt. San Antonio College, Pacific Clinics offers a 16-week course for entry-level mental health workers in conjunction with Pasadena City College. This course is open to everyone, including consumers and their families. Graduates leaving with a certificate may be able to find employment as a mental health worker, case manager assistant or mental health educator/advocate. Sample course topics include: professional roles in mental health services, documentation and reporting requirements, principles of case management and diversity, and practical field experience at Pacific Clinics sites which is supervised by case managers.<sup>34</sup>

The California Association of Psychiatric Technicians (CAPT) works with the Governor's Nurse Workforce Initiative and Office of Statewide Planning and Development Caregiver Initiative to expand training opportunities for Psychiatric Technicians. CAPT reports that hiring for Psychiatric Technicians has become competitive, with some institutions offering up to \$700 per month as a hiring bonus. A current focus for CAPT is to expand educational opportunities for the

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<sup>32</sup> County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, Mental Health Services Act, Workforce Education and Training Plan, Fiscal Year 2006-07 to 2008-9, Attachment G, page 13 found online at <http://cmhda.org/go/Portals/0/CMHDA%20Files/MHSA/WET%20County%20Tools/Los%20Angeles%20Submitted%20to%20State%20DMH.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, Mental Health Services Act, Workforce Education and Training Plan, Fiscal Year 2006-07 to 2008-9, Attachment G, p. 17 found online at <http://cmhda.org/go/Portals/0/CMHDA%20Files/MHSA/WET%20County%20Tools/Los%20Angeles%20Submitted%20to%20State%20DMH.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, Mental Health Services Act, Workforce Education and Training Plan, Fiscal Year 2006-07 to 2008-9, Attachment G, page 13 found online at <http://cmhda.org/go/Portals/0/CMHDA%20Files/MHSA/WET%20County%20Tools/Los%20Angeles%20Submitted%20to%20State%20DMH.pdf>

over 3,000 unlicensed Psychiatric Technician Aides in the state, particularly in central and southern areas of the state which have no training programs.<sup>35</sup>

### College Response and Issues

There are 14 accredited education providers for Psychiatric Technician students in California.<sup>36</sup> At least 1,530 hours of classroom and clinical instruction must be included in the program.<sup>37</sup> Recent California legislation (AB1927) attempts to make it easier for students in these programs to receive credit for previous education and other acquired knowledge when applying to the programs.<sup>38</sup>

**Table 4 – Minimum Number of Hours for Psychiatric Technician Education (Business and Professions Code Section 2586)**

Subject Area	Classroom Theory	Supervised Clinical	Total Hours
Pharmacology	54	0	54
Nursing Science	126	270	396
Mental Disorders	108	270	378
Developmental Disabilities	108	270	378
Additional Courses	180	144	324
<b>Total</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>1,530</b>

Source: State of California Bureau of Vocational Nurses and Psychiatric Technicians

To expand on those general requirements, the state has adopted regulations further defining the Psychiatric Technician curriculum, specifying that the curriculum "shall develop the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to care for patients of all ages in current health care settings." It requires the content of the curriculum to include the following:

1. Pharmacology, including knowledge of commonly used drugs and their action, computation of dosages, preparation of medications and principles of administration.
2. Nursing science, including nursing fundamentals and basic medical/surgical nursing.
3. Classifications, treatment programs and interventions for developmental disabilities.
4. Classifications, treatment programs and interventions for mental disorders.
5. Anatomy and physiology.

<sup>35</sup> McRee T., Dower C., Briggance B., Vance J., Keane D., and O’Neil E., *The Mental Health Workforce: Who’s Meeting California’s Needs?*, San Francisco, CA: California Workforce Initiative at the UCSF Center for the Health Professions. February 2003, found online at [http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf\\_files/MH-report.pdf](http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf_files/MH-report.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> State of California Bureau of Vocational Nurses and Psychiatric Technicians, *Accredited Psychiatric Technician Schools*, found online at [http://www.bvnpt.ca.gov/Education/Schools/pt\\_schools.shtml](http://www.bvnpt.ca.gov/Education/Schools/pt_schools.shtml)

<sup>37</sup> California Association of Psychiatric Technicians, “Psychiatric Technician Scope of Practice,” found online at [http://psychtechs.net/pages/about\\_scope.cgi](http://psychtechs.net/pages/about_scope.cgi)

<sup>38</sup> California State Assembly Bill 1927 found online at [http://www.chbrp.org/documents/ab\\_1927leg.pdf](http://www.chbrp.org/documents/ab_1927leg.pdf)

- 6. Nutrition.
- 7. Normal growth and development.
- 8. Psychology.
- 9. The nursing process.
- 10. Communication.
- 11. Gerontological nursing.
- 12. Patient education
- 13. Leadership and Supervision.
- 14. Treatment programs for addictive behaviors and eating disorders.

**Psychiatric Technician Programs in Los Angeles County**

The only accredited Psychiatric Technician program in Los Angeles County is at Mt. San Antonio College. The program was created as part of a project to develop a competency-based program for entry-level mental health workers. The curriculum was based on an analysis of job duties in a detailed DACUM report of the job responsibilities of Psychiatric Technicians.<sup>39</sup>

The Mt. San Antonio college program reports that it will graduate about 80 students this year (up from the 2007 graduates reported in Table 5). The demand for new hires (for new and replacement jobs) in Los Angeles County is 169 per year. It is clear that there is an acute shortage of workers coming into this occupation in the county. The nearest community college programs in other counties are Cypress College in Orange County and San Bernardino Valley College in San Bernardino County. The Cypress College program accepts only 24 students per year. There is also a program through Hacienda-La Puente Adult Education Program which offers a 1-year accredited program to prepare students for the Psychiatric Technician exam.<sup>40</sup>

**Table 5 – Psychiatric Technician Program Graduates in Los Angeles County**

CIP Code	Title	Institution	Award Level	2007 Completions
51.1502	Psychiatric/Mental Health Services Technician	Mt San Antonio College	Associate's degree	23
51.1502	Psychiatric/Mental Health Services Technician	Mt San Antonio College	Award of 1-2 academic years	20

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

<sup>39</sup> McRee T., Dower C., Briggance B., Vance J., Keane D., and O’Neil E., *The Mental Health Workforce: Who’s Meeting California’s Needs?*, San Francisco, CA: California Workforce Initiative at the UCSF Center for the Health Professions. February 2003, p. 11ff, found online at [http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf\\_files/MH-report.pdf](http://futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf_files/MH-report.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> Hacienda La Puente Adult Education Center, *Psychiatric Technician Program*, found online at [http://www.hlpaee.org/descriptions/health\\_careers/psychiatric\\_technician.htm](http://www.hlpaee.org/descriptions/health_careers/psychiatric_technician.htm)

In addition to the graduation rates of Psychiatric Technician programs, the pass rates of their graduates is an important indicator of the number of newly licensed job candidates available in the region. In 2006, the last year for which data is available, the pass rate of students completing the Mt. San Antonio program was 83%. Cypress College's pass rate was 71% and Hacienda La Puente's was 55%.<sup>41</sup>

## **Model Programs**

### ***Jumpstart Training Program***

The Jumpstart Training Program feeds the beginning of the MHALA Pipeline program discussed earlier. The program offers internships and provides a realistic experience of what it is like to work in a mental health setting. The program offers an introduction to the Peer Specialist occupations that are emerging as part of the transformation of the treatment model in the WET plan. The program also plugs into CalWorks whenever possible.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Porterville College Psychiatric Technician Program***

This program was designed to address the need for psychiatric technician students who adequately reflect the racial, ethnic, and cultural characteristics of the service area population surrounding Porterville College. The nearby Porterville Developmental Center had an urgent need for more Psychiatric Technicians. This project targeted ethnic minority high school students and adults in a program of student recruitment, retention, matriculation, completion, and licensure. Project leaders hired a bilingual recruiter to meet with Latino students in the geographic area in a variety of settings. The project partnered with the College Board to conduct a pilot test of a new, remote placement tool, HOBET (Health Occupations Basic Entrance Test), which included an ESL (English as a Second Language) listening component and instant scoring through Internet access. The project provided extensive tutoring services to under-prepared students to help them successfully complete prerequisites for the Licensed Vocational Nursing and/or Psychiatric Technician Programs. The Health Careers Program faculty incorporated an online state board review program into their coursework to better prepare students nearing graduation for licensure examination.

The project increased both the number and diversity of the licensed vocational nursing and psychiatric technician students at Porterville College. Minority enrollment increased from 14% to 60%, and the overall number of applicants doubled for both programs. The project's successful community outreach and student support services can serve as models for other allied health programs throughout the state.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Develop Additional Community College Programs**

The current shortage of candidates for Psychiatric Technician positions and the magnitude of the projected growth in demand, along with information provided by employers, underscore the

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<sup>41</sup>California Psychiatric Technician Program Pass Rates, found online at [http://www.bvnpt.ca.gov/education/pt\\_stats.shtml](http://www.bvnpt.ca.gov/education/pt_stats.shtml)

<sup>42</sup> County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, Mental Health Services Act, Workforce Education and Training Plan, Fiscal Year 2006-07 to 2008-9, External Inventory p. 13, online at <http://cmhda.org/go/Portals/0/CMHDA%20Files/MHSA/WET%20County%20Tools/Los%20Angeles%20Submitted%20to%20State%20DMH.pdf>

need for another Psychiatric Technician program in Los Angeles County. The clinical requirements are one of the major obstacles to establishing a new program, but the opportunities for students and workforce development justify the front-end work of establishing such a program.

Entry-level workers for the social work side of the industry are being trained in numerous programs throughout the region, and two new programs were recently approved in nearby Orange County for Mental Health Community Workers. The scope of this study does not include the current needs or future demands for programs training people for these unlicensed positions, which pay lower wages. However, colleges interested in serving the mental health industry may also consider opportunities on both the medical and social work sides. Though the infrastructure and program requirements are much more complex for Psychiatric Technicians, colleges should consider developing such a program because (1) there is a clear need for it, and (2) graduates of these programs have great career options and a good foundation for moving up the career ladder, because of their medical and mental health education.

### **Strengthen and Support Career Ladder and Pipeline Programs**

The L.A. County Department of Mental Health WET plan contains several general recommendations for improving career pathways for mental health workers. These recommendations apply to both licensed Psychiatric Technicians and the many unlicensed occupations in the industry

- Create and cultivate pipelines by partnering more with high schools, community colleges, and universities
- Collaborate with high schools, colleges, and universities to create curriculum with public mental health focus
- Address infrastructural issues that inhibit consumers/families (i.e. benefit loss, inflexible schedules, lack of consideration of life experience.
- Provide cultural competency training and increase translation services to address existing disparities and improve workforce<sup>43</sup>
- Identify and target high schools with health academy programs to determine their interest in developing a mental health strand as part of their health curriculum
- Identify mental health-related programs at the community college and 4 year college levels and explore opportunities for developing specific educational partnerships with the public mental health system.
- Develop articulation agreements with high schools, colleges and universities to create a formal career pathway program, modeled after MHALA's Mental Health Pipeline Program. This effort represents a longer term workforce development strategy.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, Mental Health Services Act, Workforce Education and Training Plan, Fiscal Year 2006-07 to 2008-9, Attachment H, page 3 found online at <http://cmhda.org/go/Portals/0/CMHDA%20Files/MHSA/WET%20County%20Tools/Los%20Angeles%20Submitted%20to%20State%20DMH.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, Mental Health Services Act, Workforce Education and Training Plan, Fiscal Year 2006-07 to 2008-9, Attachment G, p. 3 found online at

This last recommendation from the WET plan concerns Mental Health Pipeline Program. This program could easily be applied to Psychiatric Technician programs as well as other mental health programs. The program starts in high school and takes students on to the Cerritos College program for Community Mental Health workers and finally to California State University – Dominguez Hills program.<sup>45</sup> The California State University Dominguez Hills Human Services Program<sup>46</sup> serves as the end of the pipeline for interns, MFT interns, MSW interns and nursing students as well as psychiatrists.

Career ladders or pipelines into Psychiatric Technician careers may also be developed from the lower-level Licensed Vocational Nursing (LVN) and/or Unlicensed Psychiatric Technician occupations. Currently, LVNs working in the state hospitals are paid less than Psychiatric Technicians and have a more narrow scope of practice. There is some indication that LVNs may be re-schooling to obtain psychiatric technician licensure, thus increasing the number of staff available to serve patients in the future. A current focus for California Association of Psychiatric Technicians is to expand educational opportunities for the over 3,000 unlicensed Psychiatric Technician Aides in the state, particularly in central and southern areas of the state, which have few training programs for Psychiatric Technicians. Unlicensed Psychiatric Aides who are coming out of high school, adult education, and/or ROP programs could be “pipelined” into Psychiatric Technician programs. If they complete those programs, they would have a wide choice of work settings since they would enter the occupation with experience.<sup>47</sup>

Appendix B shows a list of community colleges providing “bridge” programs for LVNs upgrading to Psychiatric Technician and for Psychiatric Technicians upgrading to registered nurses. These are valuable programs that encourage students to think of their careers as a progression of experiential and educational steps. Along with transfer programs that prepare students to go into the licensed mental health occupations that require baccalaureate and or graduate degrees, the “bridge” programs encourage community college students to think ahead and develop a life-long career plan.

### **Increase Diversity among Psychiatric Technicians**

The County WET plan identifies the need to increase hiring to reduce disparities in licensed and support segments with regard to employees from Native American, African-American/Black and Asian/Pacific Islander populations across all segments.<sup>48</sup> The pipeline programs discussed earlier, modeled after the MHALA Pipeline Project or the Porterville Project (see details in the Model Programs section of this report) offer successful, tested models for increasing the bilingual and bicultural diversity of the workforce. Existing and future Psychiatric Technician

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<http://cmhda.org/go/Portals/0/CMHDA%20Files/MHSA/WET%20County%20Tools/Los%20Angeles%20Submitted%20to%20State%20DMH.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> Mental Health of America of Los Angeles, Human Services Academy, found online at <http://www.mhala.org/human-services-academy.htm>

<sup>46</sup> California State University Dominguez Hills, Human Services Division, found online at <http://www.csudh.edu/hhs/hd/index.htm>

<sup>47</sup> California Association of Psychiatric Technicians, found online at <http://psychtechs.net/pages/indexes.cgi?idxcatid=&idxid=8398>

<sup>48</sup> County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, Mental Health Services Act, Workforce Education and Training Plan, Fiscal Year 2006-07 to 2008-9, Attachment I, p. 11, found online at <http://cmhda.org/go/Portals/0/CMHDA%20Files/MHSA/WET%20County%20Tools/Los%20Angeles%20Submitted%20to%20State%20DMH.pdf>

programs can incorporate strategies from these models to improve the participation and success of a diverse student population.

### **Provide Alternative Educational Formats**

In the interview with Sabine Whipple of the California Institute for Mental Health, the need for online classes, programs, and retraining was discussed. Colleges have the opportunity to become continuing education providers and/or create educational programs that incorporate some online classes or training components. The flexibility of distance education and the service it provides to working students could attract more students into Psychiatric Technician programs and careers.

### **Increase Community College Participation on WET Planning Committees and Groups**

There is a large group of professionals from all over the Los Angeles region that has contributed to the development and refining of the WET Plan. Only one community college representative, Dr. Deborah Tull, Director of Special Programs and Services at Los Angeles Harbor College, has been included in that group. Increased representation in this process will ensure more successful collaborations in the implementation phase of the plan. In addition, funds from Proposition 63 are expected to be available soon, for the creation of new mental health training programs. Community colleges interested in offering training in mental health need to get involved immediately, and seek a portion of these funds to start their programs.

### **Conclusion**

During 2008-2009, the Center of Excellence at Mt. San Antonio College has prepared a series of reports on Allied Health Occupations. As the last in that series that explored six occupations that are expected to have significant unmet demands for employees in the coming 5 to 10 year period, this report on Psychiatric Technicians represents the greatest and most urgent need. Though Psychiatric Technician programs are highly regulated by the State of California and workers must have state licensure, these programs are well-suited for community colleges (and their students) and offer an opportunity for a valuable partnership to serve the mental health industry.

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Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, "Join our jail mental health services team today!"  
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State of California, Bureau of Vocational Nurses and Psychiatric Technicians, found online at <http://www.bvnpt.ca.gov/>

"State of California Job Classifications Represented by CAPT" found online at <http://psychtechs.net/page/?page=18>

Treatment Advocacy Center, "Severe Shortage of Psychiatric Treatment Beds Sounds Alarm Bell," found online at [http://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/storage/tac/documents/the\\_shortage\\_of\\_publichospital\\_beds.pdf](http://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/storage/tac/documents/the_shortage_of_publichospital_beds.pdf) and <http://www.psychlaws.org/GeneralResources/Fact3.htm>

## Resources

### **California Association of Psychiatric Technicians**

CAPT is the professional association for approximately 14,000 state-licensed Psychiatric Technicians who work in California's programs serving people with mental illnesses and developmental disabilities. These include facilities run by the state, city or county governments, hospital districts and private providers.

CAPT is also the labor union elected to represent the 7,000 state government employees in Psychiatric Technician Bargaining Unit 18, including 5,000 licensed Psych Techs and 2,000 unlicensed caregivers.

Website: <http://psychtechs.net/pages/home.cgi>

### **Mental Health of America of Los Angeles**

With cornerstones of service, education, advocacy and training, Mental Health America of Los Angeles (MHA) works to ensure that people with mental illness reach their rightful place as participating, productive members of our community. Their service sites are located in Los Angeles, Long Beach and the Antelope Valley.

MHA unites the public and professionals, people with mental illness and their parents to advance acceptance and achievement for people with mental illness. They serve adults, including those who have been homeless, and young adults, concentrating on those who are leaving foster care. They help individuals across the county with an information and assistance team, peer support networks and a toll-free peer support telephone line. Through their workforce development and training projects, they help train professionals in their "integrated service" model of recovery and teach the mental health workforce of tomorrow.

Founded in 1924, MHA is one of the county's oldest nonprofit mental health organizations and an affiliate of the national Mental Health America, and the Mental Health Association in California.

Mental Health of America's website: <http://www.nmha.org/>

Mental Health of America Los Angeles' website: <http://www.mhala.org/>

## Appendix A: How to Utilize this Report

This report is designed to provide current industry data to:

- Define potential strategic opportunities relative to an industry’s emerging trends and workforce needs;
- Influence and inform local college program planning and resource development;
- Promote a future-oriented and market responsive way of thinking among stakeholders; and,
- Assist faculty, Economic Development and CTE administrators, and Community and Contract Education programs in connecting with industry partners.

The information in this report has been validated by employers and also includes a listing of what programs are already being offered by colleges to address those workforce needs. In some instances, the labor market information and industry validation will suggest that colleges might not want to begin or add programs, thereby avoiding needless replication and low enrollments.

### ***About the Centers of Excellence***

The Centers of Excellence (COE), in partnership with business and industry, deliver regional workforce research customized for community college decision making and resource development. This information has proven valuable to colleges in beginning, revising, or updating economic development and Career Technical Education (CTE) programs, strengthening grant applications, assisting in the accreditation process, and in supporting strategic planning efforts.

The Centers of Excellence Initiative is funded in part by the Chancellor’s Office, California Community Colleges, Economic and Workforce Development Program. The total grant amount (grant number 08-305-016 for \$205,000) represents funding for multiple projects and written reports through the Center of Excellence. The Centers aspire to be the premier source of regional economic and workforce information and insight for California’s community colleges.

More information about the Centers of Excellence is available at [www.coecc.net](http://www.coecc.net).

### ***Important Disclaimer***

All representations included in this report have been produced from primary research and/or secondary review of publicly and/or privately available data and/or research reports. Efforts have been made to qualify and validate the accuracy of the data and the reported findings; however, neither the Centers of Excellence, COE host District, nor California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office are responsible for applications or decisions made by recipient community colleges or their representatives based upon components or recommendations contained in this study.

## Appendix B: Community College Programs Serving the Mental Health Care Industry in Los Angeles County

### Existing Mental Health Programs in Los Angeles County

College Program Title	Comments
<b>East Los Angeles College</b> Chemical Dependency Counselor	Comment: Accredited by Cal. Assn of Alcohol & Drug Educators. Includes abnormal psychology, co-dependency, group dynamics, prevention & education, intervention & treatment, counseling techniques, biopsychology of chemical dependency, etc. Field work required.
<b>East Los Angeles College</b> Community Health Worker	Comment: Liaison between patients and their families, and health care team. Also serves as social services resource liaison. Requires psychology courses, introduction to social services.
<b>Glendale College</b> Specialist in Alcohol/Drug Studies	
<b>Long Beach City College</b> Alcohol and Drug Studies	Comment: Includes introduction to social work, physiology & pharmacology of drugs, therapeutic process, group & family process, case management, stress management, law and ethics, HIV, dual diagnosis. Requires field studies. Certificate requires additional electives from social or behavioral sciences. Leads to certification as Certified Addiction Treatment Specialist.
<b>Los Angeles City College</b> Human Services: Drug/Alcohol	Comment: Two-year and three-year course plans.
<b>Los Angeles Pierce College</b> Addiction Studies	Comment: Transferred from L.A. Mission, where it was originally established 1983. Accredited by Cal. Assn. for Alcohol and Drug Education.
<b>Los Angeles Southwest College</b> Chemical Dependency Counselor Program	Comment: Meets requirements for certification by the California Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors.
<b>Mount San Antonio College</b> Alcohol/Drug Counseling	Comment: Meets credentialing requirements of Cal. Assn. of Alcohol/Drug Counselors.
<b>Rio Hondo College</b> Drug Studies	Comment: Includes chemical dependency, drugs and society, group process, drug education, case management, family counseling, etc., plus elective psychology and sociology. Requires fieldwork.
<b>West Los Angeles College</b> Alcohol and Drug Studies	

**Related Medical Programs Possibly Serving Mental Health Industry**

Those of special interest to Mental Health are noted in Blue

College Name Local Title	Comments
<b>East Los Angeles College</b> Medical Assistant	Comment: Program includes three options, reflected under separate T.O.P. codes: Medical Assistant (1208.00); <i>Community Health Worker (1261.00)</i> ; and Medical Secretary (0514.20).
<b>Citrus College</b> Vocational Nursing	
<b>Long Beach City College</b> Nursing: Vocational	
<b>Los Angeles Trade-Technical</b> Nursing (Vocational)	
<b>Pasadena City College</b> Nursing-Vocational	
<i><b>Rio Hondo College</b></i> Vocational Nursing	Comment: Also available: CNA-to-LVN pattern.
<b>College of the Canyons</b> Nursing: Career Ladder LVN to RN	Comment: Includes a one-semester “bridge” class and two semesters of RN curriculum. Also available: BRN 30-unit option.
<b>College of the Canyons</b> Nursing: Registered Nurse	
<i><b>Cerritos College</b></i> Nursing, R.N.	Comment: Also available: psychiatric technician-ADN mobility program; LVN-to-ADN mobility program; LVN 30-unit option; recommended pattern of transfer preparation for BSN.
<b>Citrus College</b> Registered Nursing	Comment: Also offered: LVN to RN degree upgrade; 30-unit BRN licensure upgrade.
<b>East Los Angeles College</b> Licensed Vocational Nurse to Registered Nurse	Comment: Certificate is 30-unit BRN option
<b>El Camino College</b> Nursing	Comment: Two-year program for registered nursing. Includes two LVN-to-RN patterns.
<b>Glendale College</b> Associate Degree Nursing	
<b>Long Beach City College</b> Nursing: Associate Degree (RN)	Comment: A.S. degree does not require American Institutions (U.S. history and government) coursework; A.A. does.
<b>Long Beach City College</b> LVN-to-RN Career Ladder	Comment: Certificate is BRN 30-unit LVN-to-RN licensure upgrade option. A.S. degree does not require American Institutions (U.S. history and government) coursework; A.A. does.
<b>Los Angeles City College</b> Registered Nursing	Comment: Includes 38 units of core nursing coursework and 27 units of prerequisites required by BRN.

College Name Local Title	Comments
<p><b>Los Angeles Harbor College</b> Nursing Professional RN: LVN to RN</p>	
<p><b>Los Angeles Harbor College</b> Nursing Professional RN</p>	
<p><b>Los Angeles Pierce College</b> Associate in Arts Nursing</p>	
<p><b>Los Angeles Southwest College</b> Associate in Science in Nursing</p>	
<p><b>Los Angeles Trade-Technical</b> Nursing, Registered</p>	
<p><b>Los Angeles Trade-Technical</b> LVN-to-RN Career Ladder</p>	
<p><b>Los Angeles Valley College</b> Registered Nurse</p>	
<p><b>Mt. San Antonio College</b> Psychiatric Technician to RN</p>	
<p><b>Mt. San Antonio College</b> Nursing</p>	
<p><b>Mt. San Antonio College</b> LVN to RN</p>	<p>Comment: Certificate called LVN 30-unit option: Career Mobility.' Degree is a college-structured program; certificate is available pursuant to BRN's 30-unit upgrade option rule.</p>
<p><b>Pasadena City College</b> Nursing-Registered</p>	<p>Comment: Also offered: LVN-to-RN degree upgrade; 30-unit BRN licensure upgrade.</p>
<p><b>Rio Hondo College</b> Associate Degree Nursing</p>	<p>Comment: Also available: LVN-to-RN pattern; psychiatric technician-RN pattern, BRN 30-unit option.</p>