



Frequently Asked Questions

Program Overview

What is the Mental Health Service Corps?

The New York City (NYC) Mental Health Service Corps (MHSC) is a ThriveNYC¹ workforce expansion initiative that aims to close gaps in behavioral health services and to advance innovation and public health promotion. MHSC promotes collaborative care in primary care and evidence-based innovations in behavioral health settings.² MHSC places full-time, fully-funded masters-level behavioral health clinicians (BHCs) in behavioral health clinics, substance use programs and primary care sites in high-need communities throughout NYC. The program is funded by the City of New York.

How does MHSC work in primary care sites?

MHSC BHCs use the Collaborative Care model to promote and support the integration of behavioral health services as a member of the primary care team. MHSC BHCs are supervised by a psychiatrist and a licensed clinical social worker. Supervising psychiatrists provide clinical assistance and support to primary care sites and MHSC BHCs. Services provided by MHSC BHCs include screening, assessment and treatment for a range of mental health and behavioral health conditions. In pediatric settings, MHSC BHCs can provide other services such as socioemotional screening and family treatment.

How does MHSC work in behavioral health sites?

MHSC BHCs expand and enhance behavioral health sites' capacity to meet the needs of the community served, while promoting the use of evidence-based approaches. Eligible behavioral health sites include New York State Office of Mental Health licensed Article 28 and 31 mental health clinics providing services to children and/or adults; New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services licensed Article 32 substance use clinics; and other behavioral health sites such as Personalized Recovery Oriented Services programs, Partial Hospital programs, and field-based Assertive Community Treatment teams.

¹ *ThriveNYC: A Roadmap for Mental Health for All* is a comprehensive public health approach to mental health. To learn more, visit thrivenyc.cityofnewyork.us

² Behavioral health practices include New York State Office of Mental Health-licensed Article 28 and 31 mental health clinics, New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services-licensed Article 32 substance use clinics, Personalized Recovery Oriented Services programs, Partial Hospital programs and field-based Assertive Community Treatment teams.



Frequently Asked Questions

MHSC Behavioral Health Clinicians

Who are MHSC behavioral health clinicians?

MHSC BHCs are clinically trained masters-level mental health counselors and social workers. These early career professionals are committed to working in high-need communities that have experienced barriers to accessing mental health care. MHSC BHCs are selected to meet the needs of a community based on their experience, interest and ability to speak the languages and understand the cultural needs of the patient population. They engage the community they are placed in and aid in health promotion, prevention and reducing stigma.

What do MHSC behavioral health clinicians do?

MHSC BHCs provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services and support with the assessment, screening and treatment of substance use and mental health issues. They are supervised by licensed clinical social workers in the use of evidence-based therapeutic interventions and mental health promotion methods.

Can MHSC behavioral health clinicians conduct telephonic patient encounters?

Telephonic support is an acceptable care delivery method and the MHSC BHC is allowed to provide this support. However, telephonic patient encounters do not count towards the required 20 to 25 clinical hours of face-to-face patient contact per week.

How long are MHSC behavioral health clinicians placed at a site?

MHSC BHCs are required to earn clinical hours towards advanced licensure. To earn these hours, they commit to three years of service at one or more sites.

Expectations for Participating Sites

Primary care sites are expected to:

- Identify clinical leaders at the site who are dedicated to the Collaborative Care model
- Grant MHSC BHCs access to the site's electronic health record (EHR)
- Have a panel size of at least 1,500 unique patients per site
- Establish processes for the MHSC BHC to meet a requirement of 20 to 25 clinical hours of face-to-face patient contact per week
- Become a member of NYC REACH (New York City Regional Electronic Adoption Center for Health), which assists NYC-based sites with quality improvement and practice transformation initiatives (membership is free)



Frequently Asked Questions

- Obtain and process the proper clearances for MHSC BHCs to work at the site
- Secure private and confidential space for MHSC BHCs to see patients without interruption
- Invite MHSC BHCs to staff meetings and case reviews with medical providers and other staff
- Orient, train and support MHSC BHCs in site workflow processes and procedures

Behavioral health sites are expected to:

- Participate in trainings or meetings to align with MHSC evidence-based practices in behavioral health treatment
- Participate in interviews or surveys as part of program operations and evaluation
- Establish processes for the MHSC BHC to meet 20 to 25 clinical hours per week
- Provide clinical coverage for clinicians when they attend MHSC-sponsored meetings and trainings
- Obtain and process the proper clearances for MHSC BHCs to work at the site
- Secure private and confidential space for the MHSC BHCs to see patients without interruption
- Orient, train and support MHSC BHCs in site workflow processes and procedures

How much does it cost to join MHSC?

Staffing for MHSC services, trainings, and workflow support are free. Sites cover the cost of a private space for consultations with patients and any costs related to accessing the EHR or other systems used at the site.

Can sites bill for the MHSC behavioral health clinician's services?

Direct services provided by the MHSC BHC cannot be billed. Incorporating a MHSC BHC into the site's workflow can help with capacity concerns and enable new models of care and/or service lines, which are not often supported well by payer reimbursement.

How to Join MHSC

What are the eligibility criteria for sites?

Behavioral health and primary care sites must:

- Designate site champion to be the lead contact for MHSC
- Dedicate staff who can provide on-site support, task supervision, and crisis support to MHSC BHCs
- Demonstrate a need for additional BHCs
- Have appropriate clinical and work spaces for BHCs and patients
- Be willing to participate in on-site trainings offered by MHSC to facilitate integration services
- Use MHSC to advance the use of best practice models and expand access to mental health and substance use care



Frequently Asked Questions

Sites located in high-need areas and/or serving high-need populations as determined by DOHMH receive special preference.

What is the application process and timeframe?

Sites must complete the application for either a primary care or behavioral health care site at <http://nycreach.org/practice-transformation/#mental-health-service-corps>. Sites are encouraged to submit applications as soon as possible, as availability of MHSC BHCs is limited. MHSC staff review all applications and contact eligible sites to schedule an on-site assessment.

How can I prepare for an on-site assessment?

1. Identify the site champion, who will lead the assessment. The site champion should be prepared to discuss how the site will implement the MHSC program and ensure the MHSC BHC meets a requirement of 20 to 25 clinical hours of face-to-face patient contact per week.
2. Identify the private space the MHSC BHC will use to conduct therapeutic sessions and describe how the MHSC BHC will access the EHR.
3. Be prepared to share copies of operating certificates related to providing licensed master social work, licensed clinical social work, mental health counseling, or psychotherapy services

When will MHSC notify a site if they will be assigned a behavioral health clinician?

Following the on-site assessment, MHSC will send an email to the site champion indicating if the site has been accepted into MHSC. MHSC will then recruit a BHC for the site. The timeframe for this can vary. Each search for a MHSC BHC is based on a specific site, therefore it is not possible to provide a timeframe on deployment.