

# Emerging Leaders Program

The Department of Health Services (DHS) is committed to supporting culturally appropriate community-based behavioral health services for underserved communities that face barriers in accessing and using mental health and substance use services. The Emerging Leaders Program is an important way that DHS meets the federal Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant priority area for “Culturally-appropriate and Comprehensive Services for Underserved Communities” by providing “a minimum of 14 training, technical support, or consulting sessions/modules ... to underserved population communities or service providers who target underserved communities.”

Recent global health events have shown existing health disparities for underserved communities and the need to decrease the barriers in accessing and using behavioral health services through the engagement of community-based behavioral health professionals within these underserved communities.

The goal of the Emerging Leaders Program is to build diversity and capacity in leadership of the community-based behavioral health services workforce providing services within underserved communities. The underserved communities in the Emerging Leaders Program align with DHS goals and include, but are not limited to, those who face barriers in accessing and using mental health and substance use services based on racial or ethnic status, geographic location, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other special needs (such as language barriers, disabilities, alienage status, or age).

## What is the program?

- This is an eight-month program designed to prepare the next generation of behavioral health leaders (emerging leaders) who are community-based direct service providers interested in professional development to engage and support underserved communities and each other.
- The Emerging Leaders Program curriculum was developed by established leaders from underserved communities. It focuses on cultural and community traditions, strengths, resources, and challenges.

## What does it mean to participate in the program?

- Emerging leaders attend seven 3-hour virtual meetings focused on cultural and professional development, two 3-hour virtual booster sessions, and two 3-hour virtual project presentation and graduation sessions. All sessions are held virtually from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

- Each emerging leader will be paired with a mentor, an established behavioral health professional, for the duration of the program.
- Each emerging leader will work directly with their mentor, along with support from trainers and DHS staff, throughout the eight-month program to develop and complete a project that will address the behavioral health needs in their underserved communities.

### **Why is the program important?**

- Behavioral health is a critical factor in the health and well-being of each member of underserved communities.
- Underserved communities face barriers in accessing and using mental health and substance use services.
- Increasing representation and diversity among leadership, as well as within the behavioral health workforce, is critical to improving care and services for underserved communities.

### **2025 Emerging Leaders Program Schedule**

All events will be held virtually from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

- Immersion trainings – January 21, February 4 and 18, March 4 and 18, April 1 and 15
- Booster sessions: June 10 and 17
- Project presentations and graduation: September 10 and 11

**Questions? Contact Allison Weber: [allison.weber@dhs.wisconsin.gov](mailto:allison.weber@dhs.wisconsin.gov)**

---