

## Abstract

### Project Educating Quality Integrated Professional (EQuIP) Counselors

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The University of Florida's (UF) Counselor Education (CE) master's (M.Ed.) and educational specialist (Ed.S.) degree program seeks \$999,979 in funding through the HRSA Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET) Program for Professionals (CFDA) No. 93.732 to prepare counselors to provide mental health services to children, adolescents, and transitional-aged youth in rural, underserved, and impoverished communities in North Central Florida. Within this region, there is a shortage of mental health professionals, and youth mental health needs go unmet. To increase the number of well-qualified counselors in the region, we are proposing Project Educating Quality Integrated Professional (EQuIP) Counselors, an innovative counselor training program designed to prepare master's-level counselors to work within integrated care settings through interprofessional education and high-quality internship sites. It involves a collaboration between faculty in the CE program in SHDOSE in the COE and the Office of Interprofessional Education at UF Health.

The primary aim of the proposed project is to expand the counseling workforce in primary care settings in North Central Florida through expanded community partnerships. The project goals are to (1) increase the number of trained professional counselors in behavioral health with an integration of primary care to serve diverse and underserved children, adolescents, and transitional-aged youth with mental health concerns by training 60 diverse counselors-in-training over four years; (2) develop and facilitate interdisciplinary didactic and experiential training opportunities for counselors-in-training to foster the development of competencies and support employment in the behavioral health workforce with an integration of primary care to work with diverse and underserved children, adolescents, and transitional-aged youth with mental health concerns; and (3) implement interprofessional training twice a year for faculty, site supervisors, and other community members in behavioral health and primary care settings through community partnerships. Trainees will receive a stipend in internship. Project funding will be used to create a sustainable interprofessional counseling curriculum and internship program.

Project *EQuIP Counselors* staff will recruit 60 diverse students over four years who will complete an internship, practicing from an integrated care model. Project staff will also develop and implement instructional practices to prepare students to work in these settings. Students will take an interprofessional education course where they will learn the importance of resources, identify the effects of the environment on health, conceptualize family health beliefs and behavior from a biopsychosocial framework, and assess family health care needs and health care access through an interprofessional lens. An emphasis on integrated care will continue during internship through remote instruction and clinical supervision addressing youth mental health, remote-counseling, trauma-informed, and evidence-based practices. Project personnel will create and implement distance educational modules during internship to foster competencies in interprofessional collaboration. They will also offer job and career services. Finally, project staff will offer interprofessional education workshops for faculty and community partners. Over time, the project will increase the number of internship sites and community partners, improve job placement of counselors with interprofessional competencies, influence the quality of counselor training, and improve the quality of youth mental health services in the region.