

## New Mexico's Substance Abuse Workforce

### Background and Overview

#### Quick Facts

- The median age of agency staff is 50.
- 59% of treatment staff are in recovery.
- The greatest perceived barrier to improved treatment services for staff is workload and pressures that keep motivation for new training low.

According to estimates from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, approximately 8.9 of the population in New Mexico, representing more than 169,000 individuals, are in need of treatment for alcohol abuse or illicit drug use but do not receive it.

One of the main factors contributing to the treatment gap is the severe shortage of trained and credentialed substance abuse counselors within our state. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, New Mexico employs 3.58 substance abuse counselors per 10,000 people—comparing favorably with the national average of 2.2 substance abuse counselors per 10,000 people. The increasing emphasis by state licensing entities and credentialing bodies on requirements for individuals working as substance abuse counselors may exacerbate this problem due to a shortage of educational programs available at community colleges and universities to provide specialized programming and coursework on substance abuse treatment. Other challenges facing the substance abuse workforce include the poor working conditions in many agencies, the lack of competitive salaries and opportunities for advancement, and the heavy caseloads and paperwork requirements in the field.

In an effort to better understand the conditions and the needs of the Substance Abuse Treatment Workforce in New Mexico, the Pacific Southwest Addiction Technology Transfer Center (PSATTC) conducted a survey of both substance abuse counselors and their supervisors. This survey was designed to provide the PSATTC with information on the background of the workforce, their working conditions, training and technical assistance needs, and information regarding factors associated with their job tenure and turnover.

This report provides a summary for the Arizona sample. A list of agencies in the region was compiled from the SAMHSA Treatment Locator Database and all agencies in New Mexico were selected for participation. Letters were sent to agency directors in advance of the survey and surveys were mailed two weeks later to agency directors and staff, followed by reminder letters to non-responding agencies. The Response rate among directors was 19 percent.

For more information about the project, contact the Pacific Southwest Addiction Technology Transfer Center

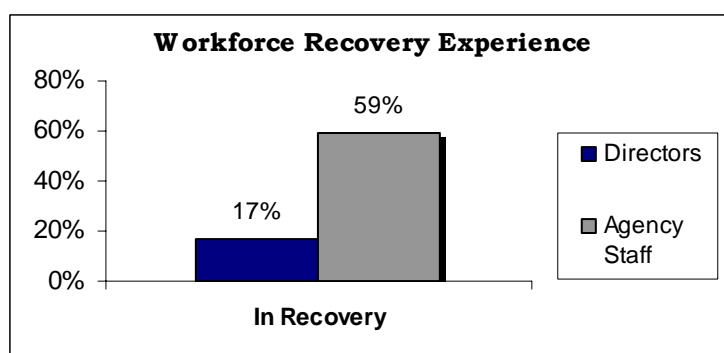
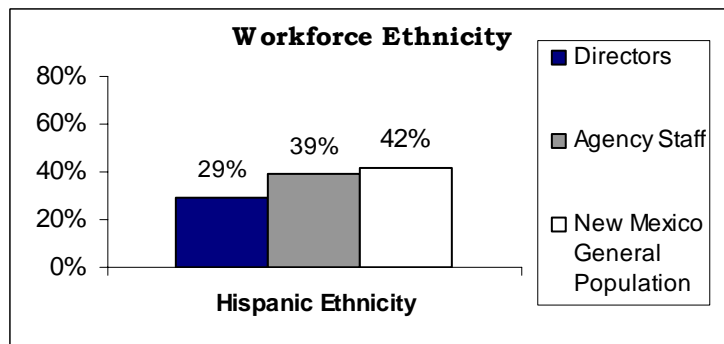
### CONTENTS

Workforce Demographics	2
Professional Experience and Compensation	2
Educational Background	3
Needs and Barriers	3
Highlights	4



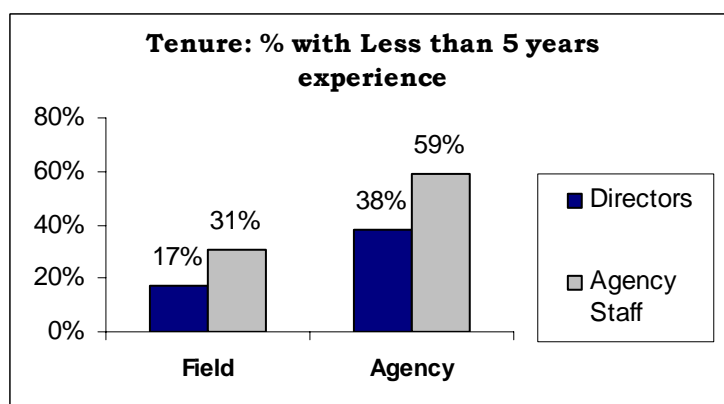
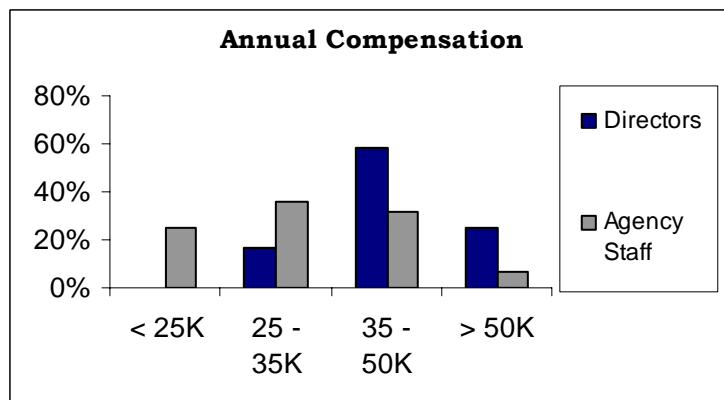
## Who is in New Mexico's Substance Abuse Workforce?

- Ninety percent of directors and over 80 percent of staff are over 40 years old. The median age of substance abuse counselors is 52 (compared to a median age of 40 for the total U.S. workforce).
- Agency staff are equally divided along gender lines. Directors of substance abuse agencies are disproportionately female (63%).
- The New Mexico substance abuse workforce is racially and ethnically representative of the state, but persons of Hispanic ethnicity are underrepresented at the director level.
- A significant proportion of the substance abuse treatment workforce is in recovery.



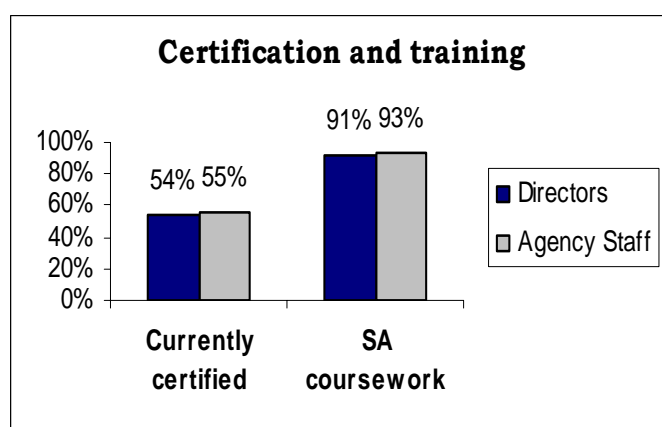
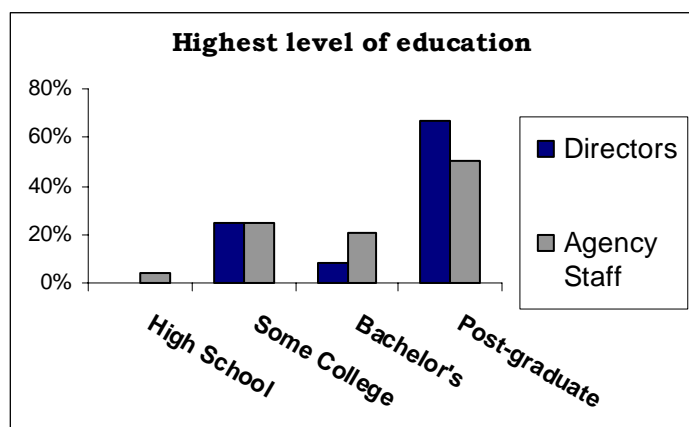
## Professional Experience and Compensation

- Compensation for agency directors is higher than for the New Mexico workforce in general, while compensation for agency staff is in the lower to middle range despite their higher education attainment.
- About 12% of the substance abuse workforce does not receive health insurance as a benefit. About one-third do not receive retirement contributions.
- Substance abuse is a second career for 29% of directors and 45% of agency staff.
- People in the substance abuse field tend to stay in the field, but change place of employment and position frequently. Only 17% of directors and 31% of staff have been in the substance abuse field less than five years., while 38% of directors and 59% of staff have been with their current agency for less than 5 years.
- Only 7% of agency staff say it is very likely that they will leave their place of employment within the next two years, while 17% of directors say it is likely that they will leave their place of employment.



## Educational and Training Background of the Workforce

- Virtually the entire substance abuse workforce in New Mexico has completed high school or a GED. However, one-quarter of agency directors and staff do not have at least a bachelor's degree.
- Over 90% of directors and staff have received specialized substance abuse training, but only about one-half of directors and staff are currently certified.



## Educational Needs & Barriers of the Workforce

- Directors are more concerned that trainings may take away staff time for service delivery than are staff. Directors and staff think that the training interests of staff are limited to certification requirements. Neither group thinks that the poor quality of trainers is a significant barrier.
- Directors place a greater importance on managing clinical, financial and outcome data. Staff place a greater importance on training needs. Directors are equally concerned with recruiting and retaining qualified staff, while staff are more concerned with retaining qualified staff.
- According to both agency directors and agency staff the most significant perceived barriers to improving treatment services are: (1) budgets that do not allow for staff to attend conferences (62%), (2) limited training interests of staff (60%), (3) limited resources for new treatments (53%), (4) workload pressures that limit motivation for training (53%), and (5) too few rewards to change treatment procedures (37%).
- Off-site workshops and on-site live training are the two most commonly utilized forms of training.
- Both agency directors and staff have prefer live training (on-site or off-site) to other methods. Program staff prefer off-site training, while directors prefer on-site training. About half report that videotape or DVD is a preferred approach, about a third prefer Internet and web-based approaches, and less than 10% prefer telemedicine or satellite training.

Top Counseling Staff Needs	
Improving Client Problem Solving Skills	66%
Increasing Client Participation in Treatment	63%
Providing Clients with Integrated	62%
Improving Client Thinking Skills	61%
Improving Client Cognitive Focus	61%

Top Agency Technical Assistance Needs	
Selecting New Treatments and Strategies for Staff Training	72%
Accessing Effective Training Programs and Resources	69%
Evaluating and Tracking Client Performance Over Time	67%
Retaining Qualified Staff	66%
Recruiting Qualified Staff	62%

**Resources**

- The New Mexico substance abuse workforce is significantly older than the U.S. workforce as a whole.
- Hispanics and Latinos are under-represented in the New Mexico substance abuse workforce.
- Over half of New Mexico substance abuse counselors are in recovery.
- There is significant variability of general educational levels in the New Mexico substance abuse workforce. A third of agency directors and staff have not completed a bachelors degree, while over 50 percent of directors and over 30 percent of staff have completed a post-graduate degree.
- Over three-quarters of the workforce has had some specialized training in substance abuse, but less than half of staff are currently certified.
- The majority of the substance abuse workforce enters the field due to previous experience or personal interest.
- Directors are paid considerably more than staff. Twelve percent of directors but more than half of staff earn less than \$35,000 annually.
- One-fifth of counselors intend to leave their place of employment within the next two years.
- Live training is the most commonly utilized form of training and most preferred.
- The greatest agency need is accessing effective training programs and resources.
- The greatest training need is improving client participation in treatment.
- The biggest barrier to improving treatment is that budgets do not allow staff to attend training.

For more information,  
visit our website at:

<http://www.psattc.org>

Arizona State University  
Center for Applied Behavioral Health Policy  
3404 W. Cheryl Drive, A-250  
Phoenix, AZ 85069-7100