

Overview of the Behavioral Health Aide Project

What is a Behavioral Health Aide?

A Behavioral Health Aide (BHA) is a counselor, health educator, and advocate. BHAs help address individual and community-based behavioral health needs, including those related to alcohol, drug, and tobacco misuse. They also provide trauma-informed approaches to mental and spiritual health care such as depression and anxiety resources, suicide prevention, grief support, and self-care tools. BHAs seek to achieve balance in the community by integrating their sensitivity to cultural needs with specialized training in behavioral health concerns and culturally appropriate approaches to treatment.

What Services do BHA's Provide?

BHA 1 – Wellness promotion through cultural activities (examples: talking circles, cultural art practices, drumming, dancing, traditional games); Education and advocacy on behavioral health topics; Community needs assessments; Screenings, intakes, and referrals; Trauma informed crisis counseling; Case management; Life skills coaching; Individual and group interventions; Psychospiritual support and education; Medication education. **BHA 2** – All of the above plus substance use disorder assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, and treatment implementation; community readiness; family intervention and counseling. **BHA 3 and BHA Practitioner** – These programs are still being created and will be available in the future.

What are the Certification Requirements?

Completed coursework from chosen educational institution; 2,000 work hours per year with a Clinical Supervisor; 200 practicum hours; monthly check-ins with Clinical Supervisor and BHA Student Support Coordinator; Identify and regularly meet with a Tribal Elder or knowledge holder; attend NW Elders, Knowledge Holders, and Culture Keeper gatherings, and completion of apprenticeship.

Which Program is Right for You?

Heritage University – Private university // Semester-based program // Most classes are in person // Located in Toppenish, WA // Social work focused. HU is offering a 2-year BHA Certificate.

Northwest Indian College – Tribal college // Quarter-based program // Most classes are virtual // Located in Bellingham, WA // Substance use disorder focused. NWIC is offering a 2-year Associate in Technical Arts in BHA degree.

The second northwest BHA Education Program cohort begins in January 2023. Please email the BHA Student Support Coordinator, Katie Hunsberger, for information on applying:
khunsberger@npaihb.org

What Support does Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (NPAIHB) Offer?

Stipend or scholarship funding // electronic equipment // school supplies // connection to Tribal Elders and knowledge holders // leadership development opportunities // advising support with our BHA Student Support Coordinator // ongoing academic support at NWIC and HU.

