

THE OFFICE OF
GOVERNOR MAURA T. HEALEY

LT. GOVERNOR KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL

Kathleen E. Walsh

SECRETARY OF THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE
OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Mike Levine

Assistant Secretary for
MassHealth

**Massachusetts Psychiatric Mental
Health Nurse Practitioner
Fellowship Program Legislative
Report**

Reporting Period: March 2023-December 2023

February 10, 2025

MassHealth

Executive Summary

In calendar year 2023, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), Tan Chingfen Graduate School of Nursing, a program of the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School (UMass Chan GSN) and the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers (MassLeague) launched the Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) Fellowship Program. The PMHNP Fellowship Program aims to increase the community health center (CHC) PMHNP workforce pipeline and increase the diversity of PMHNPs working in CHCs.

The 2023 calendar year activities included outreach to, and recruitment of, CHCs and PMHNP graduates and students. A comprehensive outreach plan targeted 52 MassLeague CHC member organizations and nine Massachusetts academic PMHNP programs. The objective was to recruit a minimum of four CHCs in the first year, with at least one CHC in a rural area, six PMHNP graduates, and 12 PMHNP students. The outcomes of the first application cycle exceeded this objective. A total of six CHCs submitted proposals and 27 potential PMHNP Fellows (12 graduates and 15 students) submitted applications. The first cohort included \$1.5 million in funding for five CHCs to host ten Fellows (7 graduates and 3 students). All Fellows began their placement by the end of April 2024.

The effort to increase the diversity of the PMHNP workforce is evidenced by UMass Chan GSN and MassLeague's ability to effectively match the available PMHNP applicants who are bilingual and/or reflect the population served by CHCs. UMass Chan GSN and the MassLeague compared the applicants' self-reported language, race, and ethnicity to the CHC patient population. This report shows the PMHNP Fellow demographics closely align with the population served by Massachusetts CHCs.

EOHHS continues to partner with UMass Chan GSN and the MassLeague to meet the goal and objectives of the PMHNP Fellowship Program.

Contents

Executive Summary	1
Legislation.....	3
Chapter 102 of the Acts of 2021	3
Introduction and Background	3
Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers (MassLeague) Subcontract	4
PMHNP Budget Overview	5
Activity Summary	5
Outreach and Recruitment	5
I. The Number of PMHNP Practitioner Applicants and Participants	6
Number of Applicants (Fellows)	6
Demographic Characteristics of Applicants.....	7
Geographic Characteristics of Participating CHCs.....	8
II. Participant Retention	8
III. Efforts to Diversify PMHNP Practitioners	9
Demographic Characteristics of Fellows	9
IV. All Program Expenditures	9
CHC Pass-through Funding	9
Administrative Expenditures	10
Future Plan for 2024.....	11

Legislation

Chapter 102 of the Acts of 2021

An Act Relative to Immediate COVID-19 Recovery Needs

1599-2026. For a reserve to enhance and expand access to mental and behavioral health supports and services and community-based primary care; provided, that funds in this item shall be administered by the executive office of health and human services; provided further, that not less than \$11,600,000 shall be expended for a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner fellowship program to recruit and retain psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners at community health centers; provided further, that annually, not later than April 1, the executive office shall submit a report to the executive office for administration and finance, the house and senate committees on ways and means, the joint committee on mental health, substance use and recovery and the joint committee on health care financing that shall detail: (I) the number of psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner applicants and participants; (II) participant retention; (III) efforts to diversify the psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners; and (IV) all program expenditures;

Introduction and Background

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic strained Massachusetts Community Health Centers' (CHCs) limited resources. During the pandemic response, CHCs were tasked with providing COVID vaccines, testing, and treatment to the general population while also continuing to care for the Commonwealth's underrepresented populations. As reported by the American Hospital Association, "historically underrepresented populations reported higher rates of depression, substance use disorders, and self-reported suicidal thoughts, with more Hispanic and Black Americans going without behavioral health treatment than the general population".¹ "CHCs are essential to reaching populations that have unequal access to care, and disproportionate and complex behavioral health (BH) care needs.

In response to the increased CHC demand for mental health and behavioral health providers, An Act Relative to Immediate COVID-19 Recovery Needs (Acts of 2021)² was passed, authorizing \$11,600,000 (\$11.6 M) for a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) Fellowship program to recruit and retain psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners at community health centers.³ The Commonwealth of Massachusetts received these funds from the U.S. Department of the Treasury under Section 9901 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), which established the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund.

¹ EOHHS RFR DOCUMENT #: FY23PMHNPFRFR

² Chapter 102 of the Acts of 2021, Section 2A, Line 1599-2026

³ <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2021/Chapter102>

Subsequently, in July 2022, EOHHS solicited responses from vendors with expertise working with community health centers (CHC) and supporting health professional residency or fellowship programs for advanced practice registered nurses (APRN) and/or students studying to be an APRN.

The Tan Chingfen Graduate School of Nursing (GSN), a program of the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School (UMass Chan GSN), responded to the EOHHS Request for Responses (RFR)⁴, emphasizing the GSN's academic excellence. The Tan Chingfen Graduate School of Nursing at UMass Chan offers graduate level nursing programs that include master's, Doctor of Nursing Practice, and PhD in Nursing programs. Graduate and postgraduate certificate nurse practitioner programs have concentrations in adult-gerontology, family, and psychiatric mental health. Many GSN nurse practitioner students who completed their clinical practicums in a CHC became permanent employees at the CHC. In addition, the GSN also manages a successful family nurse practitioner (FNP) residency funded by the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA). The success of the FNP residency has resulted in many FNPs becoming permanent employees at the CHC.

UMass Chan GSN proposed a four-year plan (fiscal year 2023-2027) to implement a successful PMHNP Fellowship to recruit, train, and retain PMHNP students and practicing professionals (graduates) at Massachusetts' CHCs.

In April 2023, EOHHS entered into a four-year Interdepartmental Service Agreement (ISA) with the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School/Tan Chingfen Graduate School of Nursing (UMass Chan GSN). The PMHNP Fellowship ISA period dates March 1, 2023 – June 31, 2027.

To assist in the design, implementation, and management of the PMHNP Fellowship, UMass Chan GSN has partnered with the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers (MassLeague). The goals of the psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner (PMHNP) Fellowship program include:

- Increase much needed psychiatric capacity at community health centers (CHCs), with a focus on increasing the number of diverse PMHNPs.
- Prepare practicing-level PMHNPs (graduate Fellows) and student-level PMHNPs (student Fellows) to care for a diverse set of patients with varying social determinants of care and complex mental health conditions.
- Facilitate a pipeline of training and transition for professionals to practice in CHCs, and
- Increase job satisfaction and retention of PMHNPs at CHCs.

Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers (MassLeague) Subcontract

On June 26, 2023, UMass Chan GSN entered into a subcontract with the MassLeague. The scope of work complies with EOHHS ISA and includes the administration and management of contracts with

⁴ Document FY23PMHNPFPRIF issued July 21, 2022

community health centers receiving funds for PMHNP Fellows. The MassLeague also provides technical assistance to CHCs.

PMHNP Budget Overview

The UMass Chan GSN ISA has a maximum obligation of \$11.6 Million. Of these funds, \$7,667,648 (66%) are allocated as pass-through funds to participating CHCs to support their PMHNP Fellowship Programs for both graduate and student Fellows. The remaining funds, \$3,932,352 supports weekly training and education (didactics) for PMHNP graduate Fellows provided by UMass Chan GSN, and administrative costs for the grant, including administrative payments to the MassLeague. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the budgeted funds per state fiscal year (FY), beginning on July 1st and ending on June 30th of the following year.

Table 1 Total Budget Dollars per Fiscal Year

	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	Total
UMass Chan GSN didactic costs	128,426	539,893	565,323	548,467	56,312	1,838,420
UMass Chan GSN admin	179,739	266,535	269,572	265,229	20,272	1,001,348
MassLeague admin	150,645	286,226	284,966	290,665	80,082	1,092,584
Pass-through Dollars	20,750	1,490,194	3,008,638	2,933,566	214,500	7,667,648
Total	479,560	2,582,848	4,128,499	4,037,927	371,166	11,600,000

Activity Summary

Outreach and Recruitment

In April 2023, EOHHS, UMass Chan GSN and the MassLeague implemented a comprehensive outreach plan targeting 52 MassLeague CHC member organizations and nine Massachusetts academic PMHNP programs. The objective was to recruit a minimum of four CHCs, with at least one CHC in a rural area, six PMHNP graduates, and 12 PMHNP students. The initial outreach event included an exhibit table and distribution of informational flyers about the PMHNP Fellowship program to all attendees at the Massachusetts Community Health Institute (CHI) annual conference. The annual CHI conference attracts hundreds of attendees including executive, clinical, administrative, operational, and management staff at the state's community health centers.

In June 2023, the UMass Chan GSN and MassLeague hosted a virtual PMHNP Fellowship Kickoff for CHCs. The Kickoff announced the pending release of the CHC Request for Proposals (CHC RFP). Further outreach to CHCs occurred through the MassLeague member portal. Using this platform, the MassLeague kept member CHCs apprised of upcoming PMHNP Fellowship information events. A total of 41 attendees, representing 17 health centers from across the state, participated in at least one event.

Recruitment of PMHNP graduates and students began in May 2023. UMass Chan GSN outreached to the nine Massachusetts graduate schools of nursing PMHNP programs. Utilizing the PMHNP programs' alumni and enrolled student listservs, potential applicants were referred to the UMass Chan GSN PMHNP website.⁵ A PMHNP Fellowship Kickoff event for directors and clinical coordinators of the PMHNP programs was offered in August 2023.⁶ A total of 14 individuals, representing seven PMHNP academic programs, attended the kickoff.

The CHC RFP and Fellow application were released in August 2023 followed by an informational webinar. From August-September 2023, UMass Chan GSN and MassLeague offered twice weekly call-in office hours to answer general questions. Attendees asking specific questions were informed that specific questions and answers would be posted publicly on the MassLeague website.⁷ The proposal and Fellow application period ended September 2023.

Of the 17 CHCs that expressed interest, a total of six CHCs (35%) submitted a proposal requesting a total of 17 Fellows (11 graduates and 6 students).

I. The Number of PMHNP Practitioner Applicants and Participants

Number of Applicants (Fellows)

UMass Chan GSN received a total of 27 Fellow applications (12 graduates and 15 students) seeking placement in a CHC. All applicants were required to meet the minimum eligibility criteria. Graduates and students must hold a registered nurses (RN) license in Massachusetts in good standing. Those who are bi-lingual and/or reflect the population served by a CHC (e.g., languages spoken, lived experience in urban or rural underserved communities) were strongly encouraged to apply.

PMHNP graduates must be board certified as a PMHNP and licensed as an APRN in Mass or must be eligible to sit for board certification in the near future. Preference was given to those who had graduated from a PMHNP program within 18 months of July 1, 2023. Applicants were asked to submit a personal statement outlining their professional goals, the populations they are interested in working

⁵ <https://www.umassmed.edu/gsn/residences-and-fellowships/psych-mhnp/>

⁶ Applications were designed using REDCap™, a secure web-based survey gathering system approved by UMass Chan compliance staff

⁷ <https://www.massleague.org/Programs/PMHNPFellowshipProgram/PMHNP.php>

with, and their desired topics for didactic learning. Graduate Fellow applicants must agree to a 12-month service commitment with the CHC.

PMHNP students must be enrolled in a full-time or part-time PMHNP program, submit a letter of approval from their academic clinical supervisor, and be planning to apply for an APRN license in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Student applicants were asked to provide a personal statement describing their professional goals for seeking a fellowship in a CHC setting, their populations of interest, and topics for learning.

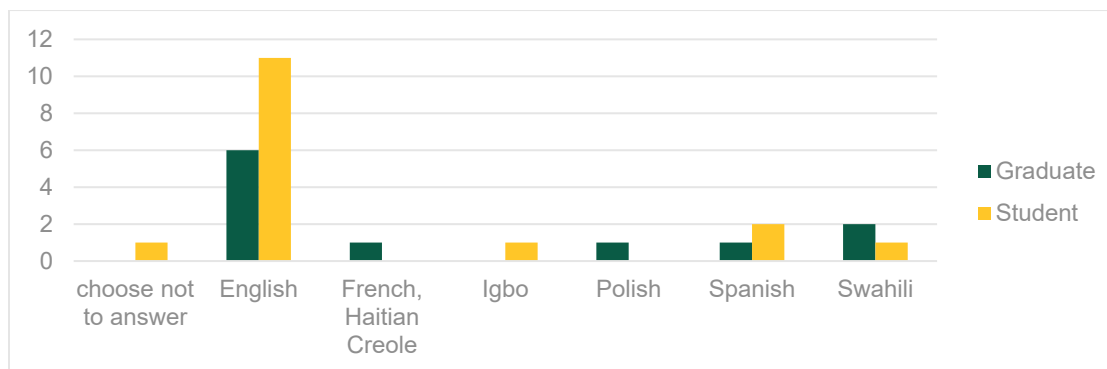
Demographic Characteristics of Applicants

The graduate and student Fellow applications were collected using REDCap™, a secure web-based survey gathering system approved by UMass Chan compliance staff. Each Fellow applicant was asked to report their demographic information (i.e., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and language). A total of 27 (12 graduate and 15 student) applications were submitted. One applicant chose not to answer demographic questions.

Language Diversity

One third (9) of applicants reported speaking at least one other language besides English (see Figure 1).

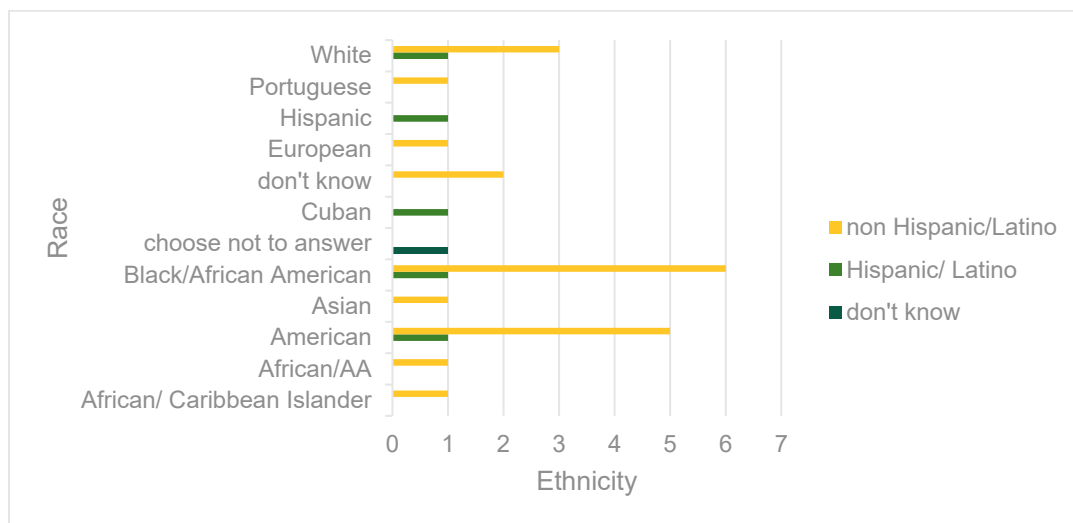
Figure 1 Languages Spoken by Applicants



Race and Ethnicity

Out of 27 applicants, five (19%) applicants identified as Hispanic/Latino. Of the remaining applicants, nine out of 22 (41%) identified as Black/African American, African, African/Caribbean Islander, or Asian (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Race and Ethnicity of Applicants



Geographic Characteristics of Participating CHCs

The PMHNP Fellowship program sought to fund a minimum of four CHCs in the first year with at least one CHC being in a rural area. The results of the first RFP cycle produced a total of six CHCs that submitted a proposal to host one to four Fellows. Following a comprehensive review of the CHC proposals, one proposal was disqualified due to not meeting the eligibility requirements. The five remaining CHCs were in the Greater Boston, Northeast, and Southeast regions of the state. None of the CHCs were from a rural area.

Table 2 shows the distribution of the 10 Fellows (7 graduates and 3 students) requested by the five CHCs.

Table 2 Approved CHC Fellow Requests

Region	Health Center	Graduate Requests	Student Requests	Total
Northeast	Lowell CHC	1		1
	Lynn CHC	2		2
Greater Boston	East Boston NHC	1		1
	Whittier Street HC	1	1	2
Southeast	SSTAR FHC	2	2	4
Total		7	3	10

II. Participant Retention

Participant retention will be measured throughout calendar year 2024 and reported in subsequent reports.

III. Efforts to Diversify PMHNP Practitioners

In addition to collecting Fellow applicants' demographic data, UMass Chan GSN conducted a prescreening assessment which asked applicants to respond to questions pertaining to their flexibility and certification. The outcome showed a total of seven (7) applicants were ineligible or unable to meet the PMHNP timeline. A total of 20 Fellows (8 graduates and 12 students) entered the matching process for the 10 Fellow (7 graduate and 3 student) slots requested by the five CHCs.

PMHNP Fellow applicants were matched based on ability to travel to the CHC, their specialty interest (substance use, children/youth, adults/elders, homelessness, refugee or asylum seekers, etc.), and how closely they aligned to the population served by the CHC.

Demographic Characteristics of Fellows

The effort to diversify the PMHNP practitioners and match them to the populations served at the CHC is evidenced by UMass Chan GSN and the MassLeague utilization of population data from the national Uniform Data System (UDS),⁸ a national public data system that lists the language, race, and ethnicity of the CHC population served.

IV. All Program Expenditures

CHC Pass-through Funding

In December 2023, UMass Chan GSN received approval from EOHHS to utilize \$1,461,267 in pass-through funding for the implementation of a PMHNP Fellowship program to five Massachusetts' CHCs located in Greater Boston, Northeast, and Southeast regions. Table 3 below provides the distribution of the award funds requested by the CHCs. Variability in funding is impacted by the number of graduates versus student Fellows requested by the CHC.

Table 3 CHC Awards

Region	Health Center	Funding Request	Total Fellows
Northeast	Lowell CHC	\$225,865	1
	Lynn CHC	\$380,716	2
Greater Boston	East Boston NHC	\$225,895	1
	Whittier Street HC	\$226,797	2
Southeast	SSTAR FHC	\$401,994	4
Total		\$1,461,267	10

⁸ <https://data.hrsa.gov/tools/data-reporting/program-data/national>

Contracts with CHCs will be executed upon successful hiring of a graduate Fellow or student match. UMass Chan GSN will oversee the MassLeague management of the CHC contracts. Pass-through funds will be issued by UMass Chan GSN to the MassLeague. The MassLeague will administer the pass-through funds to CHCs for graduate Fellows and student Fellows. Pass-through expenditures will be reported in subsequent reports.

Administrative Expenditures

The PMHNP Fellowship Program began on March 1, 2023. From March 1st to December 31, 2023, the total administrative expenditure was \$358,087.52 (see 4).

Table 4 Total Expenditures

Award Number	MEOHHS/ PMHNP Fellowship	Report Period:	3/1/2023-12/31/2023			
Award Amount	\$11,600,000	UMass Chan Award	Tan Chingfen GSN			
Sponsor Agency:	Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services					
		Award Period:	Start Date:	3/1/2023	End Date:	6/30/2027
DIRECT EXPENSES (Insert rows as needed. Complete each column.)						
Salaries & Benefits	Project Role		Salary Requested	Fringe Benefits Rate	Fringe Benefits	Amount
	Project Management		123,638.51		53,460.04	177,098.55
	Project Coordinator		10,453.51		4,541.10	14,994.44
	Education Specialists/ Asst. Professor		16,265.43		7,066.29	23,331.72
	Accounting		4,256.02		1,840.57	6,096.59
			\$ 154,613.30	42.34%	\$ 66,908.00	\$ 221,521.30
						Subtotal: \$ 221,521.30
Other Expenses Indirect Allowed						
Category	Description					Amount
Office & Admin Supplies	Office supplies					\$ 35.57
Exhibit/Display	CHI conference registration					\$ 1,800.00
Internal Recharges	Evaluator (Office of Survey Research)					\$ 810.33
Recharge - Computer	Laptops (2) and shipping					\$ 3,349.42
IT Equipment Rental/Lease	Monitors, printer/scanner, keyboard, ink					\$ 959.52
Subrecipients up to \$25K	Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers					\$ 25,000.00
						Subtotal: \$ 31,954.84
TOTAL DIRECT EXPENSES						\$ 253,476.14
MODIFIED TOTAL DIRECT COST						\$ 253,476.14
INDIRECT COSTS: (If allowable. Refer to the Sponsor Policies and Guidelines)				Rate:	36%	\$ 91,251.41
Other Expenses Indirect Not Allowed						
Category	Description					
Subrecipients over \$25K	Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers					13,359.97
						Subtotal: \$ 13,359.97
TOTAL EXPENDITURES						\$ 358,087.52
Budget						\$ 479,560.00
Expenditures						\$ 358,087.52
Total Unobligated Balance						\$ 121,472.48

Future Plan for 2024

In December 2023, UMass Chan GSN received approval from EOHHS to expand the PMHNP graduate pool to include new hires (hired between 6/1/23 to 6/30/24) as part of the graduate Fellow pool. This will increase and strengthen the CHC PMHNP workforce pipeline by training and educating new workers during their critical first year.

Graduate Fellows, including new hires, will participate in UMass Chan GSN's weekly didactic program. The didactic program will provide new PMHNP graduates and PMHNPs recently hired by a CHC with a comprehensive education, peer sharing, and mentorship program. Additional learning and networking opportunities will include:

- Psychiatry Grand Rounds from the UMass Chan Department of Psychiatry.
- Interdisciplinary Seminars offered by UMass Chan Department of Psychiatry and GSN.
- Self-directed online learning modules.
- Group clinical supervision with case presentations,
- Wellness sessions with outside consultants for burnout prevention and resiliency building.

In addition, PMHNP graduates and newly hired PMHNPs will be incentivized to continue in their role at the CHC beyond the 12-month service commitment through retention/sign on bonuses and a paid preceptor training opportunity. These strategies aim to reduce attrition and increase long-term retention at the CHC. Student Fellows receive a stipend for their semester long fellowship and will be eligible to apply for a graduate Fellowship upon graduation.

In April 2024, UMass Chan GSN and the MassLeague released an updated cycle 2 CHC RFP and Fellow application. The goal is to obligate the remaining \$6,206,381 in pass-through funds across the final two cohorts by December 31, 2024.