



THE FOUNDATION FOR MEDICAL EXCELLENCE

11740 SW 68th Parkway, Suite 125, Portland, Oregon 97223-9014

PH: (503) 222-1960 • FX: (503) 619-0609 • EMAIL: info@tfme.org • WEB: www.tfme.org

Oregon Wellness Program Annual Report for 2024 Activities Presented to the Oregon State Board of Nursing January 31, 2025

The purpose of this document is to respond to the requirements of the agreement between The Foundation for Medical Excellence (TFME) and the Oregon State Board of Nursing (OSBN) concerning the Oregon Wellness Program (OWP).

Introduction and OWP Overview

The OWP is a key element of a board-based effort by the health care community and Oregon health care policy leaders to promote the wellbeing of health care professionals through education, coordinated counseling services, and research. The community believes that supporting provider wellbeing improves career retention of health care professionals and therefore improves public access to health care services.

As a state-wide mental health counseling program, the OWP is dedicated to confidentially serving the urgent mental health and counseling needs of Oregon's health care professionals. It provides services to clients who self-refer (not referred by employers or family or friends) and does not offer services to evaluate or treat ongoing medical issues, drug or alcohol abuse disorders or practice competency concerns. These are in the purview of the relevant licensing boards.

OWP services are 100% confidential and free of charge to the client. No insurance is billed. The client is eligible for up to three, one-hour counseling sessions.

Services are provided by a mental health care team of 32 professionals ranging from MSWs, PMHNPs, Psych Ds, PhDs to MD/DO Psychiatrists. All services are currently offered via telehealth. To participate in the program, the mental health care team member must be recommended by their professional colleagues, have experience in treating fellow health care professionals, be in good standing with their professional board, be in private practice, have in-force professional liability insurance, commit to see clients within three (3) business days of initial client contact and accept a standard one-hour fee for services with no supplemental billings.

OWP and OSBN – A Shared Vision

OSBN licensee demand for OWP services has increased dramatically since the program launched in 2018. Understanding the root causes of this demand – and solutions for addressing these root causes of an increasingly broken healthcare system – is complex, but the value that OWP services provide for its OSBN licensee clients is, luckily, quite evident.

Weaknesses in our modern healthcare systems were amplified during the pandemic, and these fissures continue. Limited capacity and staffing issues in hospitals, nursing homes, and clinics puts even more pressure on healthcare professionals to perform in an environment with scarce resources. Health care systems and clinics have responded by increasing compensation levels and hiring temporary staff. While more inpatient hospital beds and emergency room spaces are needed, their solutions are longer-term and, in the meantime, health care professionals remain under pressure to serve more patients in the same physical space. In the first weeks of 2025 we witnessed this pressure come to a head in what is currently the largest healthcare professional labor strike in Oregon history.

Obviously, the problems of modern healthcare are encompassing and vast. OWP, with the continued support of the OSBN, has focused its resources on meeting an increased demand for mental health services, by providing beleaguered healthcare professionals with space for confidential, timely, and complimentary care by a team of mental health professionals with healthcare backgrounds and sensitivity to the unique challenges faced by healthcare professionals. As we continue to search for ways to systematically fix healthcare, the OWP provides a proven, meaningful reprieve for healthcare professionals who are struggling *now*.

Client testimonials, and the section on research below (“Outcome Measures”), illustrate that the OWP has proven to be uniquely effective in addressing and eliminating barriers that often prevent professionals from accessing mental health services. Participants with extended engagement in the program report notable improvements in their professional satisfaction, personal well-being, and ability to deliver high-quality care to Oregonians. The OWP serves as a vital safeguard against healthcare burnout, enhancing worker satisfaction and compassion—factors closely linked to improved patient outcomes and increased staff retention.

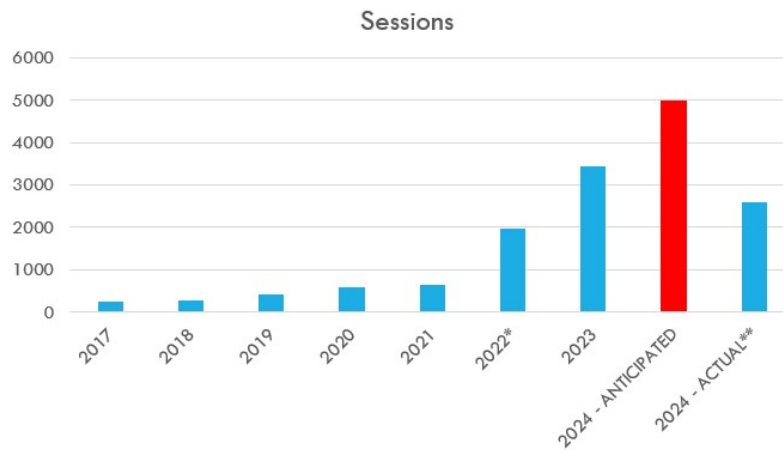
Unfortunately, the increased demand for OWP services comes at a time of financial stagnation for the program. Understandably, board licensee fees such as those provided by the OSBN are limited. Many healthcare systems, health insurers, and medical societies face their own financial hardships and have limited or discontinued their financial support. In 2024, the OWP made the difficult decision to reduce program benefits mid-year, from a renewable annual benefit of (8) sessions to a one-time benefit of (3) sessions. In the section “Funding and Budget Request” we outline our reasoning behind this decision, and our plan for obtaining long-term financial stability and reinstating the original (8) session client benefit.

Program Utilization

Between January and December 2024, OWP mental health care professionals provided **2,581 one-hour counseling sessions** to **611 clients**. The program served **263 OSBN clients** and provided those clients **1,191 hours of counseling**. This compares to 278 OSBN clients and 1,586 hours of counseling in the same 12 months of 2023. A dedicated team of 32 mental health professionals uphold the OWP’s standards of confidential services offered within 3 working days of a client’s request.

The first table below depicts program growth since the inception of OWP as a coordinated state-wide effort, and the second table shows the breakdown of clients by gender, age, license type and practice location.

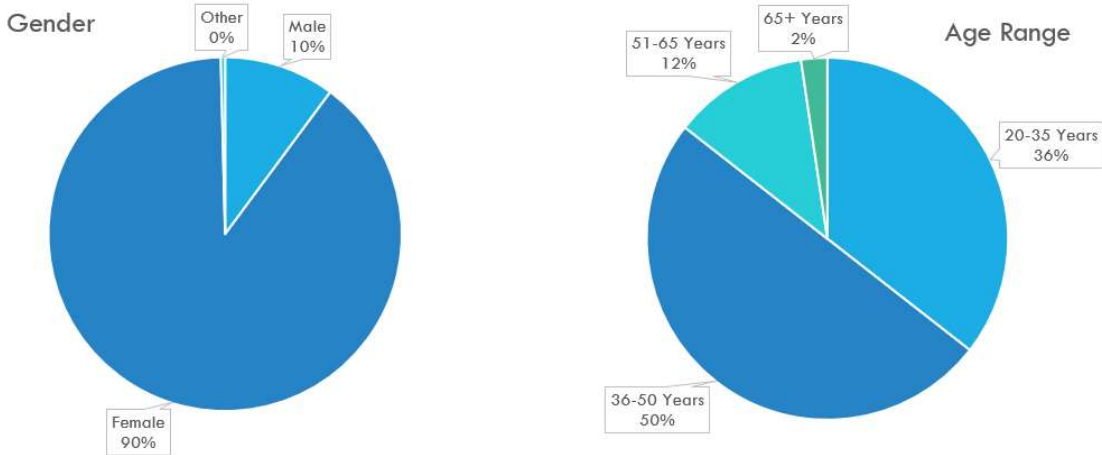
OWP GROWTH (2017-2024)



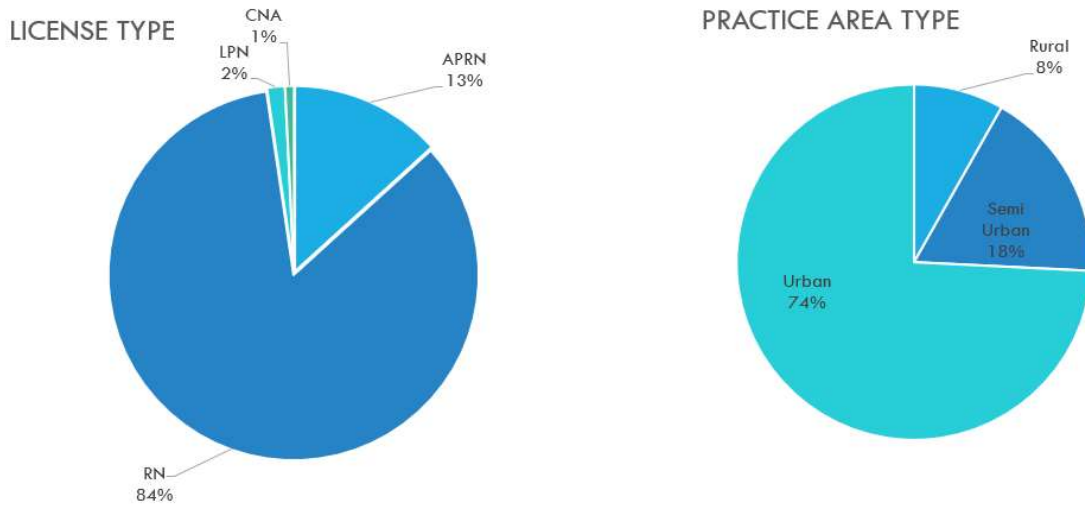
* Nurses became eligible to participate in June 2022

** To avoid financial shortfall, OWP benefits were reduced in mid-2024

2024 OWP OSBN CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS — GENDER AND AGE



2024 OWP OSBN CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS — LICENSE AND LOCATION



Outcome Measures

In early 2023, funding from the OSBN and OAHHS allowed Ben Domogalla, RN, a PhD candidate at OHSU's School of Nursing, to study the value of mental health services provided by the Oregon Wellness Program (OWP). The investigator developed a comprehensive survey administered at two time periods (six- to nine-months apart) to the same cohort of Oregon healthcare professionals. Oregon licensed healthcare professional respondents included both users and non-users of the OWP.

Data Provided: The methods were designed to identify individual demographics, a range of psychosocial states, and perceived barriers to accessing mental health services. Screening tools included measures such as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs, a major predictor of future emotional/psychological difficulties); Professional Quality of Life (compassion satisfaction vs compassion fatigue (i.e., burnout)); and qualitative statements regarding clients' perceived barriers to accessing mental health services.

Demographics: Two hundred eighty (280) surveys were returned during the initial time period and one hundred and sixteen (116) during the second time period. The ratio of response from different licensee groups reflected the size of their respective statewide professional license cohorts. The average respondent age was 46 years, current practice duration nearly eight years, majority identified as women. Of the respondents, 25% were OWP users who had utilized mental health sessions on average eight-times-per-year for just over two years.

Results: The results were significant: nearly 40% of respondents had high ACE scores (>4), which are strongly associated with an increased risk of burnout and negative psychological outcomes. Longer participation in the OWP was significantly correlated with higher compassion satisfaction. Additionally, OWP users experienced a greater reduction in compassion fatigue over time compared to non-users.

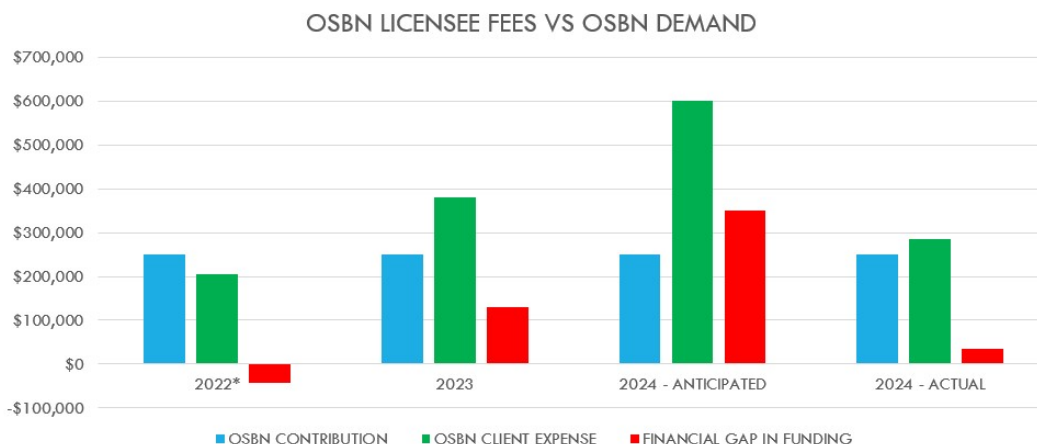
OWP Design Benefits: Qualitative data from all respondents revealed that the OWP planners had correctly identified and removed virtually all barriers (considered disincentives) by users and non-users to utilize mental health services. Those program design choices include providing free, confidential care without reporting to any authority, timely appointments (within three days of outreach), utilizing mental health professionals familiar with the challenges of providing frontline healthcare, and the convenience of telehealth visits.

Summary: This prospective study highlights the substantial risk of negative psychological outcomes faced by Oregon healthcare professionals throughout their careers. The OWP has proven to be uniquely effective in addressing and eliminating barriers that often prevent professionals from accessing mental health services. Participants with extended engagement in the program report notable improvements in their professional satisfaction, personal well-being, and ability to deliver high-quality care to Oregonians. This study demonstrates that the OWP serves as a vital safeguard against healthcare burnout, enhancing worker satisfaction and compassion—factors closely linked to improved patient outcomes and increased staff retention.

Program Financials (2024)

We have included copies of the latest TFME Statement of Financial Position and a display of OWP dedicated accounts. The reports are prepared by Susan Matlack Jones and Associates, LLC, a Portland Oregon firm that specializes in financial accounting for not-for-profit organizations.

OSBN CLIENT DEMAND OUTPACING OSBN FUNDS



* Nurses became eligible to participate in June 2022

In our early 2024 report to the OSBN, we shared our concern that there was a significant funding gap between what the OSBN could provide via licensing fees and the potential cost of caring for OSBN licensees. Utilization of OWP services had steadily grown since the program's inception, and dramatically increased since the pandemic. In the past, gift contributions from health systems and expansion grants have covered the deficit, but in the increasingly volatile healthcare financial landscape, health system contributions to the OWP have dwindled. In past years, up to six systems gave. In 2024, Legacy Health Systems was the last remaining contributor.

At the time of that report, TFME was seeking 1 million dollars in funding from the Oregon State Legislature to help stabilize the program and meet the increased demand for OWP services. The OWP faced spending \$1,150,000 meeting service demand in 2024 (an estimated 5,000 sessions at \$200/MHP session and 20% overhead for staff, insurance, accounting and marketing), with board licensing fees (OMB, OSBN, OBD) collectively covering only \$415,000 of that need. When the 2024 request for state legislative funding was unsuccessful, the OWP faced a significant undertaking to bridge the financial gap until positive legislative action could be attempted again in early 2025. OWP leadership launched a response to the shortfall with a mid-year, multi-part approach:

1) 2024 Reduction in OWP Service Benefits

To ensure that Oregon's healthcare professionals continued to have access to OWP services, the Executive Committee made the difficult decision to reduce the number of sessions offered as of July 1, 2024. This approach sustained the program and maximize the number of clients able to access to its services. The reduction in the number of sessions from (8) renewable year-to-year to (3) as a one-time benefit saved the program \$580,500 dollars in the 2nd half of 2024. The Program remained dedicated to providing clients with the support they need during this transition, and OWP Mental Health Providers worked with new and existing clients to connect them with continuing therapy if desired after their initial (3) complimentary sessions to ensure continuity of care using insurance, out-of-pocket payments, or their employee EAP resources. Additionally, OWP's Executive Committee set aside \$20,400 in emergency session funding for OWP mental health providers to use at their professional discretion in circumstances where a client required more care than the limited OWP sessions could provide.

The OWP communicated these programmatic changes with the OSBN leadership in early 2024, and an executed amendment to the OSBN/OWP MOA was produced for both parties in early June 2024 acknowledging these changes.

2) One-time Emergency Funds to Bridge Gap

One-time gap funding was secured in mid-2024 from CareOregon (\$250,000) and EOCCO (\$50,000). Additionally, a restricted 2-year-grant from PacificSource Foundation for 2024-2025 provided \$25,000 in 2024 to support nurse clients.

3) Renewed Request for Legislative Funding in 2025

Organizations that represent Oregon's health care professionals (OMA, ONA, ODA and the Hospital Association of Oregon) have again teamed up to advocate for Oregon Legislative investment in the provision of OWP services to our health care professionals' community. During the 2025 full legislative session, our lobbyist team is requesting \$1.6 million in the 2025-2027 biennium budget. If funding is secured, the OWP would reinstate its original program offerings of up to (8) complimentary sessions per client, renewable year-to-year. The results of this request should be known by spring 2025. Until then, with support from the licensing boards and the remaining OWP emergency funding, the OWP is currently in a position to maintain its reduced offerings of (3) sessions per client through the end of 2025.

In summary, the strategic reduction in services in mid-2024, bolstered by the emergency gap funding allowed the OWP to stabilize the program's financial obligations and maximize the number of clients able to access its services in 2024 and 2025.

OSBN Budget

The balance of OSBN's OWP account funds - \$262,317 - will be coupled with the 2024/2025 PacificSource Foundation grant to fund OWP services for OSBN licensees in 2025.