

Examining the Relationships between Population Health, Community Conditions and Provider Shortages for Mental Health in Missouri

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About Me



- BS, Community and Public Health, 1997
- MA, Sociology, 2006
- PhD, Health and Human Performance – Concentration Public Health, 2018
- 25 years in Higher Ed
- 22 years working with students going into Public Health and HealthCare
- Research Interest – HP Shortages, Mental Health
- MHFA Instructor – Adult
- Personal Experience led me to asking this specific research question.

Scope and significance of provider shortages in Missouri



Mental Health Provider Shortage

Missouri faces a critical shortage of mental health providers affecting access to essential care across communities.

Primary Care Limitations

Primary care providers often lack adequate training and resources to address complex mental health conditions effectively.

Access Barriers

Long wait times and travel distances for specialized care create significant barriers worsening mental health outcomes.

Need for Systemic Solutions

Urgent systemic changes are needed to strengthen the mental health workforce and promote integrated care models.



Barriers and Contributing Factors to Provider Shortages

According to Americashealthrankings.org (2025), Missouri ranks 35/50 for number of mental health providers per 100,000 population (273.3)





Challenges in underserved and rural regions

Geographic and Demographic Barriers

Low population density and long distances between services hinder access to mental health care in rural areas.

Limited Professional Resources

Fewer professional development opportunities and specialist support reduce retention of mental health providers.

Financial and Social Barriers

Lower reimbursement rates, uninsured residents, and stigma discourage providers and patients in rural communities.

Professional Challenges and Trends in Shortage Areas

Healthcare
Workforce
Shortages



Burnout, workload, and work-life conflict for providers

High Workload Pressure

Providers in underserved areas face heavier workloads and frequent off-hours demands, increasing stress levels significantly.

Burnout Among Providers

Burnout rates rise in rural communities due to continuous professional and personal challenges faced by providers.

Work-Family Conflict

Balancing work responsibilities with family life becomes difficult, resulting in significant work-family conflict for providers.





Financial, accessibility, and stigma-related barriers

Accessibility Challenges

Patients in rural and underserved areas face difficulties accessing mental health care due to provider shortages and coverage gaps.

Financial Barriers

High uninsured rates and low reimbursement reduce mental health practice viability in many communities.

Stigma Impact

Social stigma discourages patients from seeking mental health support, complicating care delivery.

Expanded role of primary care providers in shortage areas

Increased Clinical Responsibilities

Primary care providers in shortage areas face growing clinical duties, including mental health management.

Mental Health Screening Role

Primary care practitioners are tasked with mental health screenings due to limited access to specialists.

Training and Support Gaps

Lack of sufficient training and support challenges primary providers managing behavioral health needs.



Provider perspectives and workforce issues



Provider Shortage Causes

Lack of funding and poor reimbursement rates contribute significantly to mental health provider shortages.

Workforce Retention Challenges

Low retention due to unattractive profession and aging workforce affects availability of mental health providers.

Demand and Caseload Pressure

Increasing demand for mental health services creates high caseloads and stress for providers.

Cost of Living Impact

Cost of living in underserved areas and low pay discourage providers from working in these regions.



Factors influencing retention and provider satisfaction

Organizational Support

Supportive administration and reasonable working hours encourage mental health professional retention in shortage areas.

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance is a key factor cited by clinicians who remain in underserved regions.

Meaningful Work

A strong sense of purpose and meaningful work motivates providers to stay and reduces turnover.

Challenges Leading to Attrition

Limited scope of practice and frustration contribute to clinicians leaving shortage areas.



Effects on suicide risk, youth vulnerability, and population access



Mental Health Professional Shortage

Shortage of mental health professionals reduces access to care and worsens health outcomes in communities.

Increased Suicide Risk

Reduced provider access is strongly linked to higher suicide risk among vulnerable populations.

Youth Vulnerability

Adolescents face particular vulnerability due to limited mental health services in underserved areas.

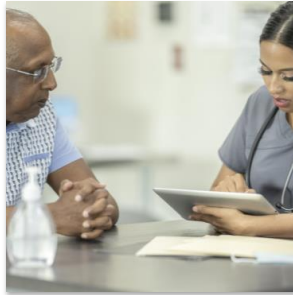
Population Access Disparities

About 91 million people live in shortage areas and have lower rates of seeking mental health care.

Emerging Solutions and Directions in Addressing Shortages



Integrated care models and provider well-being strategies



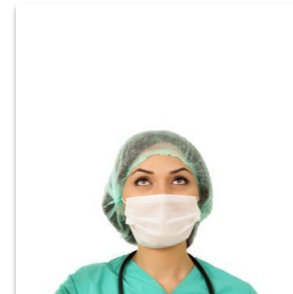
Integrated Care Models

Integrated care models coordinate primary and behavioral health services to enhance access and improve patient outcomes.



Reducing Provider Burnout

Strategies focus on reducing burnout among mental health providers by improving administrative support and workload management.



Work-Life Balance and Retention

Addressing work-life balance is crucial to encourage provider retention and maintain professional well-being.

Grass Roots Efforts????



Policy interventions and fostering meaningful clinical work

Reducing Stigma in Healthcare

Policy efforts focus on reducing stigma to encourage clinical practice in underserved regions.

Reshaping Reimbursement Structures

Reforming financial incentives aims to address economic barriers for clinicians in shortage areas.

Fostering Meaningful Clinical Work

Encouraging purpose and community engagement among providers enhances meaningfulness in clinical roles.



Missouri-Specific Data: Relationships and Community Conditions



Research question and variables examined



Research Question

What relationships exist between provider shortages and county attributes in the state of MO?

Community Conditions Variables

Includes social, economic, environmental, and health infrastructure factors impacting community health.

Population Health & Wellness

Measures life expectancy, quality of life, and mental health across counties in Missouri.

Health Provider Rates

Examines rates of mental health and primary care providers relative to community needs.

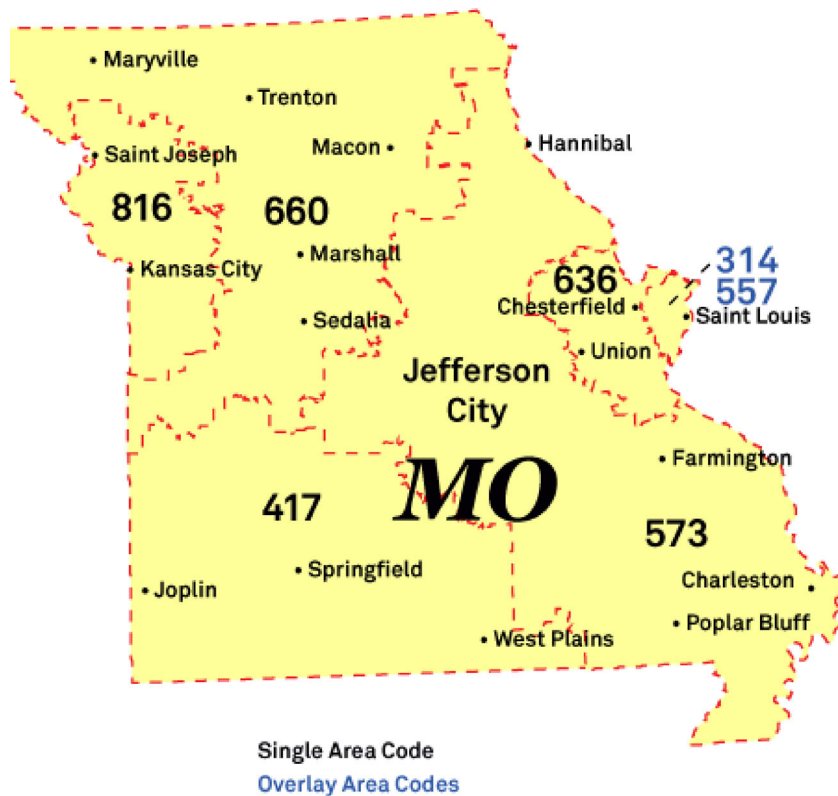
Variable Details



Primary care provider shortages occur more often in areas with poorer community conditions, showing a strong negative correlation. ($p \leq .001$)

Addressing Shortages: Barriers, Strategies, and Resources





Barriers contributing to shortages in Missouri

Access Challenges

Limited availability of qualified mental health providers restricts access to necessary care across Missouri.

Workforce Shortage

Insufficient number of trained mental health professionals contributes to unmet patient needs in the state.

Geographical Disparity

Rural and underserved areas face greater shortages compared to urban centers in Missouri.

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Strategies to address service needs and provider commitment

Community Mental Health Services

Implement accessible and culturally sensitive mental health services to meet diverse community needs effectively.

Provider Recruitment and Retention

Develop incentives and supportive work environments to attract and retain committed mental health providers in underserved areas.

MHFA??

Psychological First Aid???



Q&A

Let's Talk!

