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## Cerritos College Mental Health Worker Pathway Expands to ABC and Norwalk La-Mirada District High Schools

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**Media Contact:** [Aya Aoki](#); Public Affairs

**NORWALK, Calif. – April 13, 2023 –** Cerritos College is adding two new cohorts in a dual enrollment Mental Health Worker pathway (MHWP) with the ABC Unified and Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School Districts this summer. In 2021, the College's [Mental Health Worker Program received a \\$25,000 grant from the California Department of Education in collaboration with Cal-HOSA](#) to launch a behavioral and mental health pathway for high school students, and since then the program has grown and expanded to four districts. "Dual enrollment provides an amazing opportunity for students in high school to also obtain college units," said Laura Tchulluian, senior manager of dual enrollment at the College. "With this Mental Health Worker Pathway, we are seeing dual enrollment students succeed and receive a Mental Health Worker certificate in as little as 18 months and begin their career preparation."



**A Mental Health Worker Program class**

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a significant increase in the demand for social and mental health services. According to the program instructor Melanie Martins, LCSW, there are several conversations across various systems such as homeless services and mental health about how to increase the workforce. "Many of our systems are greatly understaffed and are eagerly searching for employees," said Martins. "The MHWP creates a pathway that benefits both students and employers. It provides opportunities for students and fills a huge gap in social services."

One of the most valuable aspects of the program, in addition to the classes, is the internship opportunity that students are placed in for their field experience class. According to the program's internship instructor Andrea Sanserino, LCSW, mental health agencies are always looking for quality staff, and currently have many positions open. "Often, I hear how hard it is to find candidates. The education that our students get throughout this program, both the theoretical foundation and the practical application in their internships, puts them in a great position to begin to fill some of these gaps," said Sanserino. "As we continue to increase the number of students in the program, we are

increasing the impact on many levels of the mental health workforce and realizing the vision to expand recovery-oriented mental health services."

For more information about the Mental Health Worker Program, please contact Psychology Professor Dr. Jaclyn Ronquillo-Adachi at [jronquillo@cerritos.edu](mailto:jronquillo@cerritos.edu).

**About Cerritos College:** *Cerritos College serves as a comprehensive community college for southeastern Los Angeles County. Communities within the college's district include Artesia, Bellflower, Cerritos, Downey, Hawaiian Gardens, La Mirada, Norwalk, and portions of Bell Gardens, Lakewood, Long Beach, Santa Fe Springs, and South Gate. Cerritos College offers degrees and certificates in more than 180 areas of study in nine divisions. Annually, more than 1,200 students successfully complete their course of studies. Enrollment currently averages 21,000 students. Visit Cerritos College online at <http://www.cerritos.edu>.*

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