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Illinois Department of Human Services Awards \$4 Million in Grants to Support Students Preparing to Become Behavioral Health Workers

CHICAGO - The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) announced today that it has awarded \$4 million in grant funding to support the Certified Recovery Support Specialist (CRSS) Success program. The CRSS Success program prepares students for entry-level positions as behavioral health workers, specifically in the areas of mental health and substance use recovery. The program is administered through IDHS's Division of Mental Health and was created by the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act which Governor Pritzker signed into law in 2019 and is funded by adult-use cannabis tax revenue.

IDHS awarded CRSS Success Program grants to 11 post-secondary educational institutions across the state. Recovery Support Specialists work in a variety of capacities, such as inpatient and outpatient mental health and substance use treatment services, mobile crisis teams, recovery homes, and living rooms, which are programs that provide a safe, inviting, home-like atmosphere where individuals can calmly process a crisis event. The creation of this new program will also expand the number of Recovery Support Specialists who can help to address the harmful effects of the war on drugs and heal residents in Illinois.

“The Recovery Support Specialist program is a triple-win. It provides quality training and education for individuals in recovery. Individuals who complete the training will provide quality services for people with mental health and substance use challenges. And the behavioral health workforce will benefit from the addition of these skilled workers,” **said Grace B. Hou, Secretary, Illinois Department of Human Services.** “We are excited to launch this new program that is funded by the passage of the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act. Certified Recovery Support Specialists will be trained to effectively utilize their lived recovery experience in ways that help others gain hope and achieve specific life and recovery goals.”

“These grants allow for colleges and universities to advance the CRSS Success program with more resources to support students, including funded practicum experiences and assistance with tuition, books, fees, and certification costs. Programs like this really propel the way for students to be set up for success as they enter the behavioral health workforce,” **said David Albert, PhD, Director, Division of Mental Health, IDHS.**

Students in the program receive full funding that assists with tuition, textbook costs, application fees, childcare, and transportation. The program provides post-secondary education for up to 600 individuals with lived experience of mental health and/or substance use recovery to enter the behavioral health workforce.

Interested students can apply for the program at the following colleges and universities:

- College of DuPage
- Elgin Community College
- Governor’s State University
- Heartland Community College
- Illinois Institute of Technology
- Malcolm X College
- Northern Illinois University
- Rincon/New Hope School of Counseling
- Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
- Southern Illinois University School of Medicine
- University of Saint Francis

For more information, [click here](#).