

AN ACT concerning health.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 5. The Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Administrative Act is amended by adding Section 18.9 as follows:

(20 ILCS 1705/18.9 new)

Sec. 18.9. Cultural Empowerment Program.

(a) Subject to appropriation, the Department shall create the Cultural Empowerment Program, which shall make grants-in-aid to one or more community providers to provide outreach, engagement, training, and support to faith-based organizations serving communities that are underserved by mental and behavioral health resources. The Department shall provide a list of ZIP codes identifying the targeted communities.

(b) Grantees under the program shall utilize all available resources to provide initial relationship building within community areas by delivering training to faith-based leadership and providing connection through personal stories from persons with lived expertise to the leadership of faith communities or their congregations. Grantees shall provide information about the Certified Recovery Support Specialist

(CRSS) credential to interested individuals.

(c) Grantees shall build relationships with local community mental health centers (CMHCs) and other behavioral health providers to help facilitate linkage to mental health services for people in targeted communities. Grantees shall ensure that consumers in the program experience a warm handoff between the grantee and the CMHC or other service provider, and to the greatest possible extent, shall assist consumers in navigating or bypassing wait lists and other barriers to accessing care. Grantees shall use their relationships with CMHCs and service providers to support expansion of services when needed and where possible.

(d) Grantees under the program shall utilize their expertise to build relationships with faith-based communities in the targeted communities and ensure that those organizations are aware of the behavioral health resources available. Grantees shall support faith-based communities in advocating for community members who are affected by behavioral health conditions to access mental health treatment and recovery services that shall assist them in living healthy and productive lives.

(e) The Department shall prioritize organizations that are existing trusted messengers within targeted communities in awarding funding under the program.

(f) The Cultural Empowerment Program established by this Section shall begin operations no later than July 1, 2024.