



# Delaware Behavioral Health Professional of the Year Program

## Background and Purpose

In 2021, the Delaware State Behavioral Health Professional of the Year Program was established under House Bill 35 of the 151st General Assembly. The Delaware Department of Education drafted Regulation 239 to implement the program and establish policies and procedures for the award. The first state winner will be selected in June 2022 to serve as the 2023 Delaware Behavioral Health Professional of the Year.

This program requires that each year, every school district recognizes outstanding service by school employees who are health care practitioners or human service providers who offer services for the purpose of improving an individual's mental health. Such school employees include school counselors, school social workers, licensed clinical social workers, school psychologists and school nurses. The Delaware Charter School Network also is invited to participate to select a Behavioral Health Professional of the Year to represent all charter schools in the state.

From those nominated at a building level, one behavioral health professional of the year moves forward to represent each district or the charter school community in the state program. The state program will choose one person annually to serve as Delaware Behavioral Health Professional of the Year.

## Eligibility

Nominees should be skillful and dedicated behavioral health professionals employed by a district or charter school.

To be eligible as a state nominee, the candidate must:

- Have at least three years' experience as a behavioral health professional (the experience is not required to be in the same district/school or position);
- Hold a certification or licensure credential through the Department of Education and/or the Professional Regulation Board;
- Continue to serve in a behavioral health position for the award year.

Individuals named Delaware Behavioral Health Professional of the Year are not eligible for nomination in a future year.

Individuals who have been recognized as a district or charter network Behavioral Health Professional of the Year in the previous three years are not eligible for state nomination.

## **Nomination Process**

Each school district will nominate one behavioral health professional employed within one of its school buildings to represent the district each year. Likewise, the Delaware Charter School Network is invited to select one nominee to be selected from any charter school to represent all charter schools. The resulting 20 district/charter school BHP representatives will compete for the statewide BHP of the Year Award.

Local nomination processes are at the determination of the local district or charter network. The state recommends final selection of each district/charter-level Behavioral Health Professional the Year include a broad-based committee representative of behavioral health professionals, educational support professionals, teachers, administrators, students and families.

The Delaware Department of Education recommends local timelines allow for district/charter winners to be determined by March 31. The districts/charter network must submit the names of their nominees for the state award to the Delaware Department of Education by April 1. Nominees must submit the state application by May 1. Nominees will participate in an interview with selection committee in May. The state winner is announced in late May or early June.

## **Selection**

The Delaware Department of Education's Behavioral Health Professional of the Year Selection Committee will include internal and external members. The committee will review written applications and three letters of recommendation to make a recommendation to the Secretary of Education, who will select the winner. The committee will base its selection on evidence of the following:

- Nominee is an exceptionally dedicated, knowledgeable, and skilled BHP;
- Nominee promotes positive, supportive and professional image of BHPs within his/her work site and community.

The applications should include supporting evidence detailing specific incidences that indicate how the nominee meets the criteria and award requirements. The letters of recommendation should represent the support of colleagues, administrators and/or students/families.

The selection committee will weigh the written application and letters of recommendation as 60 percent of the total score with the interview worth 40 percent.

Application and guidelines for submission can be found on the Delaware Department of Education website.

*For questions, contact Alison May at [alison.may@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:alison.may@doe.k12.de.us) or 302-735-4006.*

### **Award, Recognition and Funding**

- Each district/charter network winner will receive a \$2,000 personal award from the winner's district or charter school.
- The state winner will receive an additional \$3,000 personal award from the Delaware Department of Education as well as \$5,000 to be used for the educational benefit of his or her students.
- The Delaware Behavioral Health Professional of the Year will be announced at a statewide event that honors all 20 honorees. Media will be invited to the announcement, which also will be highlighted in department communications.
- Recognition will include a plaque for the statewide BHP.

Complete guidance on the funding and expenditure of Behavioral Health Professional of the Year Awards is outlined in Regulation 239. The district is responsible for advising their nominee about Regulation 239. Likewise, DOE staff is responsible for advising the State BHP of Regulation 239.