



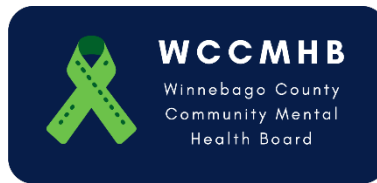
## News Release

### For Immediate Release

**Date:** May 8, 2026

**Contact:** Jason Holcomb, Director of Community Impact

**Email:** [jholcomb@r1planning.org](mailto:jholcomb@r1planning.org) | **Phone:** 815-227-1022



### **\$500,000.00 Available for Mental Health Workforce Student Support (MHWFSS)**

**ROCKFORD, IL** — The Winnebago County Community Mental Health Board (WCCMHB) is seeking enrollment from eligible public or nonprofit higher educational institutions for the Mental Health Workforce Student Support (MHWFSS) program. This non-competitive funding opportunity provides financial assistance to students who wish to enter the mental health or substance use workforce through their respective educational institutions. Up to \$500,000.00 is available for disbursement over the 2026-2027 Academic Year.

For the MHWFSS program, the Board will accept enrollment from qualified higher educational institutions must meet the criteria outlined in the non-competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) in order to enroll and maintain eligibility. Students eligible for aid through this program must be enrolled in either a Bachelors of Social Work, Masters of Social Work, or Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner program.

“Mental health and substance use workforce has been a longstanding issue within our community. With the establishment of the Mental Health Workforce Student Support (MHWFSS) program, the Board hopes to reduce the barriers to accessing higher education in these critical fields.” Board President Mary Ann Abate says. “We wish to support local students on their journey in social work or medication-prescribing fields by providing a last-resort source of financial assistance.”

For details about this program and eligibility requirements, see the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) posted at [r1planning.org/wccmhb-funding-resources](http://r1planning.org/wccmhb-funding-resources).

Questions can be emailed to [info@mentalhealth.wincoil.gov](mailto:info@mentalhealth.wincoil.gov).

*Submission of enrollment does not guarantee approval or the award of funds.*

**ABOUT WCCMHB** – The [Winnebago County Community Mental Health Board](http://www.wincoil.gov/wccmhb) (WCCMHB) is a board of appointed community leaders and public officials dedicated to investing and supporting mental health and

substance use services for adults and children in Winnebago County. WCCMHB receives funding through a half-cent sales tax which was approved by Winnebago County residents in March 2020 and November 2024. This sales tax generates approximately \$20 million annually for mental health and substance use services across the county. WCCMHB positively impacts the Winnebago County community by increasing access to local services by providing support and funding to organizations, non-profits, and government agencies that offer mental health and substance use services. This allows Winnebago County residents to live and recover in the community.

**ABOUT RPC** – [Region 1 Planning Council](#) is a special-purpose, regional government agency providing cross-jurisdictional, government-to-government collaborative planning for Northern Illinois. The regional planning model provides an efficient means to promoting a well-informed, comprehensive dialogue that holistically addresses regional issues by fulfilling the needs of government entities for long-range planning, securing funding, and analyzing and providing data in support of regional projects and initiatives. *The Region 1 Planning Council provides staff support to the Winnebago County Community Mental Health Board.*

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