

# HCAI Initiatives: Building California's Behavioral Health Workforce

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HCAI Health Workforce Development

# Agenda

- HCAI Overview
- BH-CONNECT
- Behavioral Health Services Act
  - Five-Year Workforce Education and Training Plan
- Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative
  - Certified Wellness Coaches
  - Open Doors
  - Youth Mental Health Academy

# HCAI's Vision and Mission



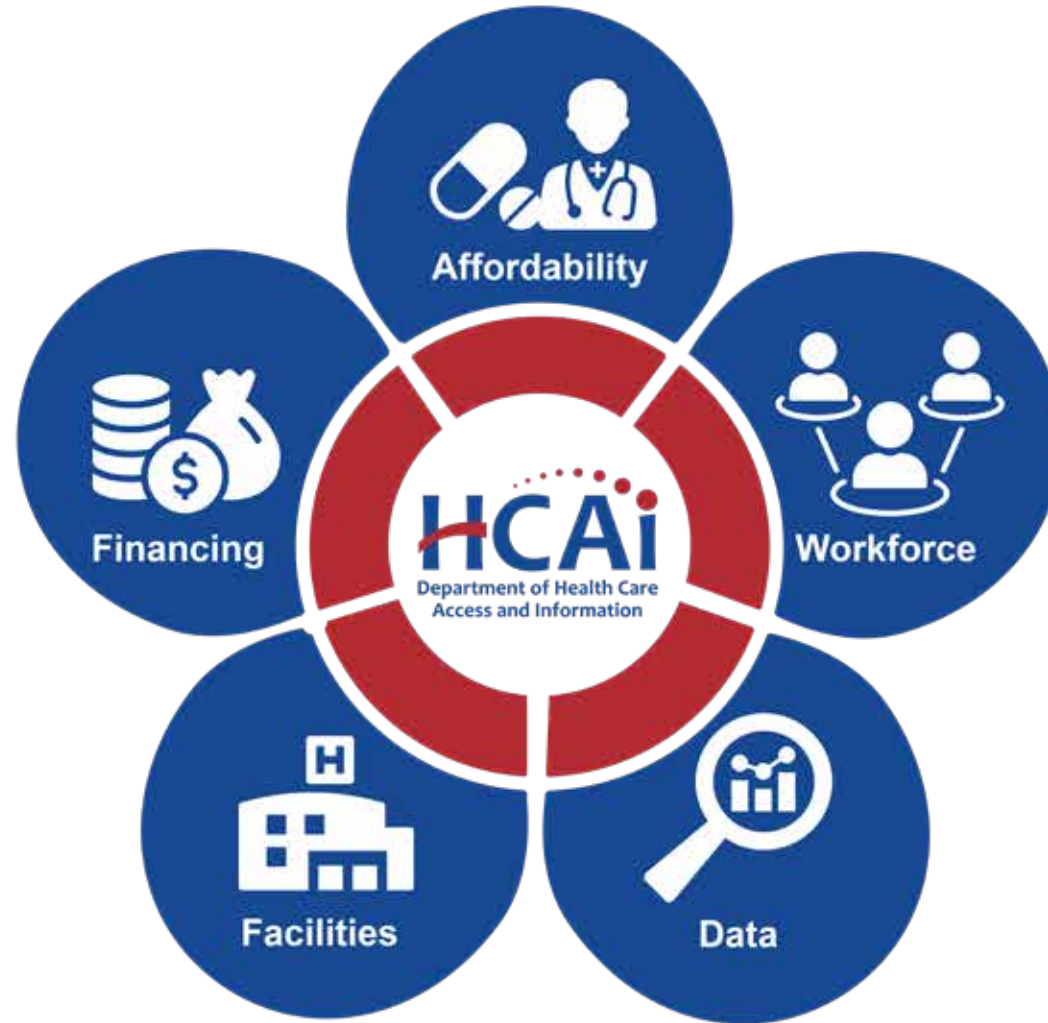
## **Vision**

A healthier California where all receive equitable, affordable, and quality health care.

## **Mission**

HCAI expands equitable access to quality, affordable health care for all Californians through resilient facilities, actionable information, and the health workforce each community needs.

# HCAI Program Areas



# HCAI Health Workforce Approach

## Develop, support and expand a health workforce that:

- Serves medically underserved areas
- Serves Medi-Cal members
- Reflects and responds to the needs of California's population

A circular icon with a blue background and a faint image of a person sitting at a desk in a clinical setting.

**BEHAVIORAL  
HEALTH**

A circular icon with a blue background and a faint image of a nurse in a white coat with a stethoscope.

**NURSING  
& MIDWIFERY**

A circular icon with a blue background and a faint image of a doctor in a white coat examining a patient.

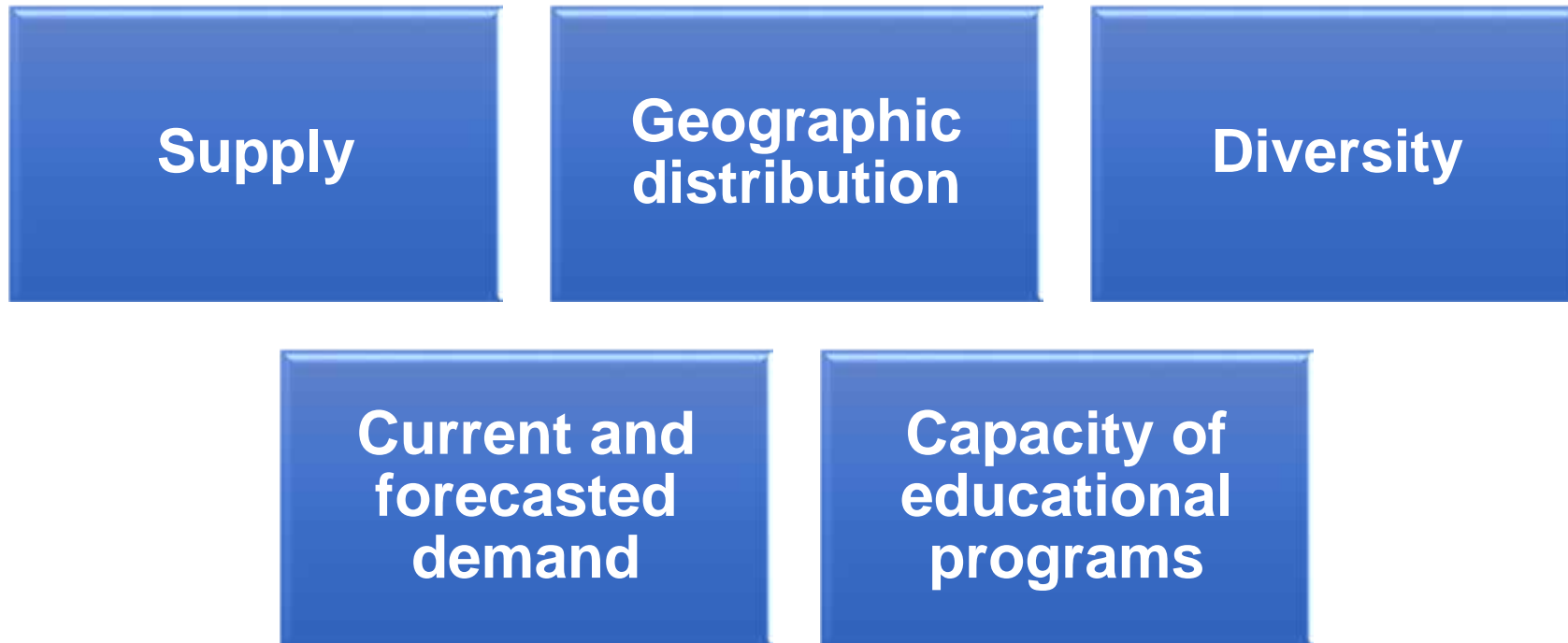
**PRIMARY  
CARE**

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**ORAL  
HEALTH**

# HCAI Workforce Supply & Demand Models

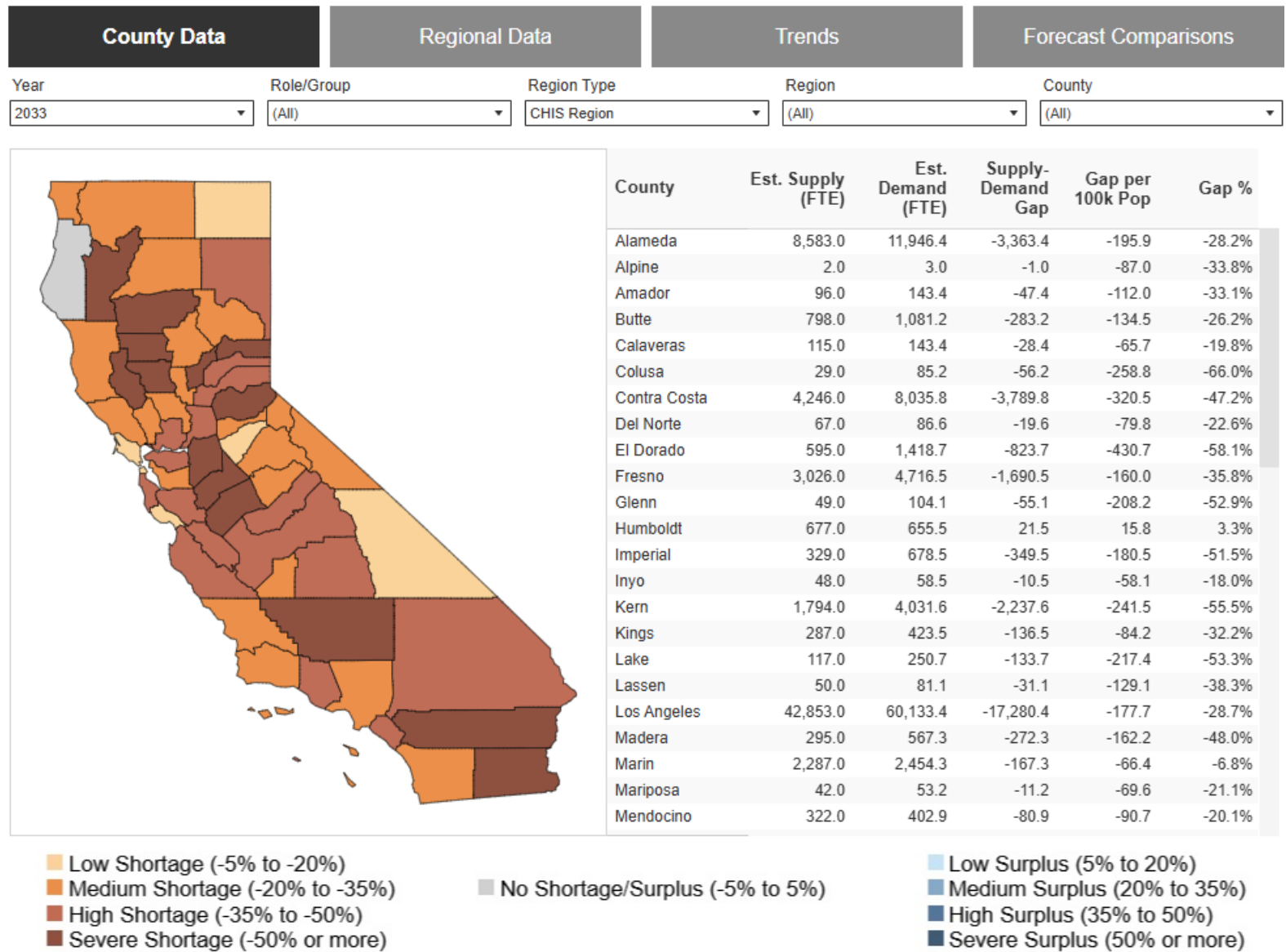
**Enables a better understanding of California's health workforce supply/demand gap**



Learn more: HCAI's [Health Workforce Supply and Demand Modeling Webpage](#)

# Dashboards & Datasets

# Supply & Demand Modeling



Supply and Demand dashboards have been launched for behavioral health and nursing workforce.

# HCAI Key Behavioral Health Programs

- **The Behavioral Health Community-Based Organized Networks of Equitable Care and Treatment (BH-CONNECT) Demonstration Workforce Initiative** aims to develop a behavioral health workforce to serve Medi-Cal members with five programs focused on:
  - Training
  - Recruitment
  - Retention
- **The Workforce Education and Training (WET) Plan**
- **The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI)**, a five-year initiative that supports California's children, youth and families:
  - Certified Wellness Coaches
  - Open Doors
  - Youth Mental Health Academy (YMHA)





# **BH-CONNECT Workforce Initiative**

# BH-CONNECT Workforce Initiative

- The Workforce Initiative supports the training, recruitment and retention of behavioral health practitioners to provide services across the continuum of care within the Medi-Cal safety net, serving Medi-Cal members and the uninsured.
- Between 2025 and 2029, in partnership with the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) and HCAI will invest up to \$1.9 billion in five workforce programs.
- Recipients of workforce funding commit to serving Medi-Cal members living with significant behavioral health needs for 2-4 years.



# BH-CONNECT Workforce Programs

Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Student Loan Repayment Program

Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Scholarship Program

Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Recruitment and Retention Program

Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Community-Based Provider Training Program

Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Residency Training Program

# BH-CONNECT Budget and Timeline: Indicative

Program	Total
Behavioral Health Scholarship Program	\$234,000,000
Behavioral Health Student Loan Repayment Program	\$530,000,000
Behavioral Health Recruitment and Retention Program	\$966,000,000
Behavioral Health Community-Based Provider Training Program	\$85,000,000
Behavioral Health Residency Program	\$85,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,900,000,000</b>

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Behavioral Health Student Loan Repayment Program	Jul Launch				
Behavioral Health Residency Program	Jul Launch				
Behavioral Health Scholarship Program		Q1 Launch			
Behavioral Health Community-Based Provider Training Program		Q1 Launch			
Behavioral Health Recruitment and Retention Program		Mid 2026 Launch			

# Eligible Professions

## Professions

Licensed providers with prescribing privileges

Non-prescribing associate level pre-licensure practitioners

Non-prescribing licensed practitioners

Non-prescribing behavioral health providers

Providers and practitioners that meet the California Medicaid State Plan, such as:

- Community Health Worker services
- Rehabilitative Mental Health services
- Substance Use Disorder Treatment services
- Expanded Substance Use Disorder Treatment services

*Non-exhaustive list*

# Eligible Sites

## Sites

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC)

Community Mental Health Centers (CMHC)

Rural Health Clinics (RHC)

Settings with the following payer mix:

- Hospitals with 40 percent or higher Medicaid and/or uninsured population
- Rural hospitals with 30 percent or higher Medicaid and/or uninsured population
- Other behavioral health settings with 40 percent or higher Medicaid and/or uninsured population

# Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Student Loan Repayment Program

This program facilitates awards to behavioral health professionals with educational debt:

- Licensed, prescribing behavioral health practitioners are eligible for up to \$240k in loan repayment; four-year service obligation
- Non-prescribing licensed or associate level pre-licensure practitioners are eligible for up to \$180K; four-year service obligation
- Non-licensed, non-prescribing practitioners, including substance use disorder (SUD) counselors, Community Health workers, Peer Support Specialists and Wellness Coaches are eligible for up to \$120K: service obligation:
  - \$20K or greater is four years
  - \$10K - \$20K is three years
  - Less than \$10K is two years

# Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Scholarship Program

This program facilitates scholarships to individuals pursuing behavioral health degrees or certifications:

- Individuals participating in educational programs to become licensed, prescribing behavioral health practitioners are eligible for up to \$240K in scholarship funding; four-year service obligation
- Individuals participating in educational programs to become non-prescribing licensed practitioners are eligible for up to \$180K; four-year service obligation
- Individuals participating in educational programs to become non-prescribing, non-licensed practitioners are eligible for up to \$120K; service obligation:
  - \$20K or greater is four years
  - \$10K - \$20K is three years
  - Less than \$10K is two years

# Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Recruitment and Retention Program

This program provides recruitment and retention bonuses, supervision support for pre-licensure and pre-certification practitioners, and certification/licensure and training supports with the aim of recruiting and retaining behavioral health practitioners to serve the Medi-Cal population.

Provides Funding for these Categories	Service Obligation
Up to \$20,000 recruitment bonuses and Up to \$4,000 retention bonuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$20K = four years</li> <li>• \$10K - \$20K = three years</li> <li>• Less than \$10K = two years</li> </ul>
\$50,000 Recruitment Bonus (Stipends)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$20K or greater = four years</li> <li>• \$10K - \$20K = three years</li> <li>• Less than \$10K = two years</li> </ul>
Up to \$1,500 for licensure and certification costs	Two years
Up to \$35,000 per year per organization to support supervision of pre licensure/certification providers	None
Backfill for evidence-based practices (EBPs): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$750 per day for practitioners with prescribing privileges</li> <li>• \$500 per day for non-prescribing licensed practitioners</li> <li>• \$250 per day for other non-prescribing behavioral health practitioners</li> </ul>	None

# Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Community-Based Provider Training Program

This program facilitates grants to individuals to support the development of community-based providers such as alcohol and other drug counselors, Community Health Workers, and Peer Support Specialists.

- Training programs may receive up to \$10,000 per individual to train alcohol or other drug counselors, Community Health Workers and Peer Support Specialists.
- Requires a three-year full-time service obligation for qualified individuals receiving this support

# Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Residency Training Program

This program facilitates up to \$250K annually/per slot in awards for residency programs to expand the number of graduate medical education slots for:

- General Psychiatry residency
- Child Psychiatry fellowships
- Addiction Psychiatry/Addiction Medicine fellowships

Requires residents and fellows to participate in the Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Student Loan Repayment Program during their residency/fellowship with a four-year service obligation requirement after completion of residency.



# **Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) and the Five-Year WET Plan**

# BHSA Overview

The Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) is the first major structural reform of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) since it was passed in 2004.

The BHSA:

- Expands treatment to include those with substance use disorders (SUD)
- Prioritizes care for those with the most serious mental illnesses
- Provides ongoing resources for housing and workforce
- Continues investments in prevention, early intervention, and innovative pilot programs

*Note: Because of the expansion to include SUD, the law updates the name of the MHSA to the BHSA.*

# BHSA: Priority Populations

## Eligible children and youth who satisfy one of the following:

- Are chronically homeless or experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness<sup>[16]</sup>
- Are in, or at risk of being in, the juvenile justice system<sup>[17]</sup>
- Are reentering the community from a youth correctional facility
- Are in the child welfare system pursuant to W&I Code sections [300](#), [601](#), or [602](#)
- Are at risk of institutionalization<sup>[18]</sup>

## Eligible adults and older adults who satisfy one of the following:

- Are chronically homeless or experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness<sup>[19]</sup>
- Are in, or at risk of being in, the justice system
- Are reentering the community from state prison or county jail
- Are at risk of conservatorship<sup>[20]</sup>
- Are at risk of institutionalization<sup>[21]</sup>

# BHSA Workforce Funding

The BHSA, which was passed by California voters in March 2024, includes two mechanisms to support building a pipeline of behavioral health professionals:

- **Statewide Investment:** Effective July 1, 2026, 10 percent of BHSA funding is directed to statewide investments, including 3 percent allocated to **HCAI** for workforce investments.
- **County-Directed Investments:** In addition to the statewide investment, counties may use a portion of their Behavioral Health Services and Supports (BHSS) allocation on **Workforce Education and Training activities**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W&I Code Section 5892, subdivision (a)(3)

# The Intersection of BHSA and WET Plan

## The **Five-Year WET Plan**:

- Established in [state statute](#) under the MHSA and continued within the **BHSA**.
- Focuses on creating and **sustaining a culturally competent, client-driven behavioral health workforce**.
- Serves as a guide for **developing Behavioral Health Workforce programs**.

# WET Plan Implementation Timeline

## Completed Implementation

### January 2025

- Developed background information for stakeholder engagement process
- Conducted survey of potential stakeholders (600)
- Identified 15 topic for exploration

### May and June 2025

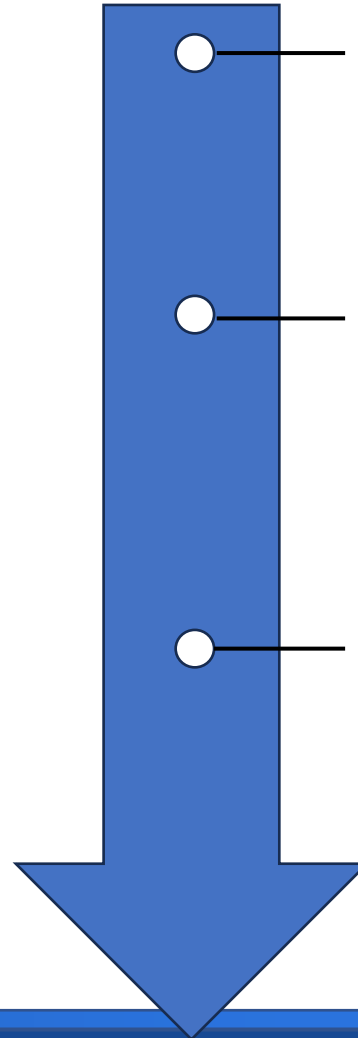
- Secured facilitation contract with CSUS
- Identified over 300 individuals wanting to participate

### July through August 2025

- Convened 21 community engagement sessions
- CSUS to prepare summaries of convenings with conclusions that will inform workforce program strategies

### September through October 2025

- Conducted California Behavioral Health Planning Council's Workforce and Employment Committee engagement session
- Began drafting behavioral health workforce intervention framework



## November 2025 through December 2025

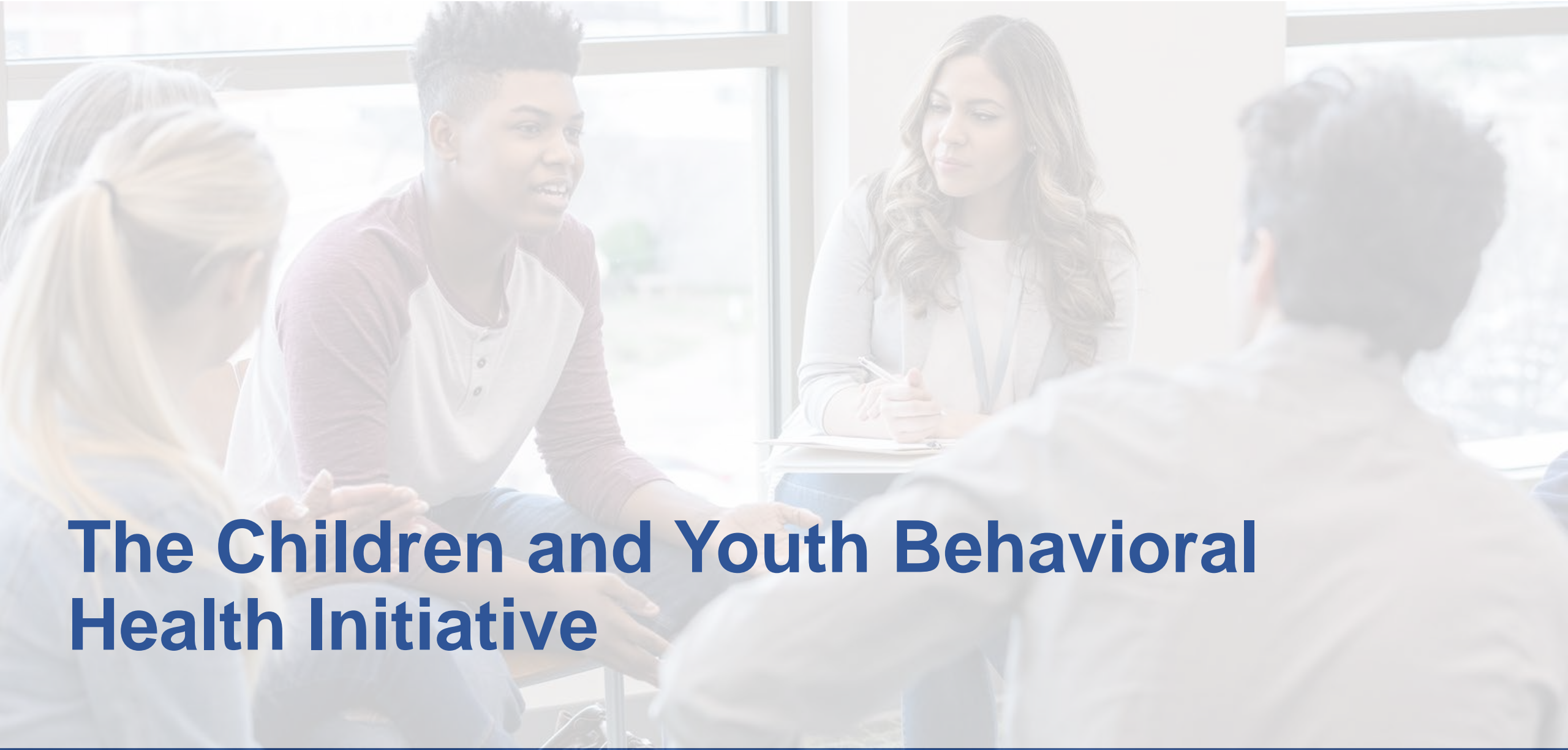
- Continue to draft **behavioral health workforce interventions** based on stakeholder input and findings from analysis of WET (2020) and CYBHI (2021-25) data

## January through March 2026

- Draft **2026-2030 Five-Year WET Plan** review and approval by HCAI Workforce Leadership and the Director's Office
- Draft review and approval by the California Health and Human Services Agency

## April through July 2026

- Review and approval of the final plan draft by the full California Behavioral Health Planning Council
- Publish the final plan (June 2026)
- Present the plan to the HCAI Health Workforce Education and Training Council (July 2026)



# The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative



# Commitment to Certified Wellness Coaches

The 2021-2022 California Budget included a multi-billion-dollar investment and **five-year plan to transform the behavioral health system for children and youth.**

As part of that funding and plan, **HCAI received funding to design and build the Certified Wellness Coach workforce.**

# The Problem Certified Wellness Coaches Address

Children and youth have inadequate and inequitable access to the behavioral health care they need.





# The CWC role is designed to...



**increase overall capacity** for children's behavioral health.



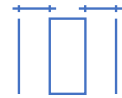
serve **vulnerable populations of children where they are.**



**engage directly with children and youth through age 25.**



build a **public behavioral health workforce** that better **represents the diversity of California's children & youth.**



**fill some of the workforce gaps** that exist today.



ensure the role is both a **desirable occupation** and a **stepping-stone to more advanced roles.**

# Behavioral Health Career Lattice

Select Observations

- The Certified Wellness Coach role is designed to be an additional opportunity in the lattice, **bridging the gap between roles** with minimum to no training to Master's-level training.
- The Certified Wellness Coach role **offers employment and training to those that want to advance their careers** to higher levels of the career lattice.

Minimum Education Level Required	Illustrative Behavioral Health Lattice with Example Behavioral Health Roles				
Supervised Professional	Certificate	Other non-BH roles	Community health worker	Peer support	SUD counselor
	Associates	Certified Wellness Coach I			
	Bachelors	Certified Wellness Coach II	Social worker		
	Masters	School counselor, school psychologist, social worker, or individuals working towards licensure (incl. PPS)			
Independent Practitioner	Licensure	Licensed clinicians, school nurse, pupil personnel services			
	PhD	Psychologist (incl. PPS)			
	MD	Psychiatrist, primary care providers			

# Services and Competencies of the CWC

## Services

*Activities core to the Certified Wellness Coach roles*

- 1 Wellness promotion and education
- 2 Screening
- 3 Care coordination and extension
- 4 Individual support
- 5 Group support
- 6 Crisis referral

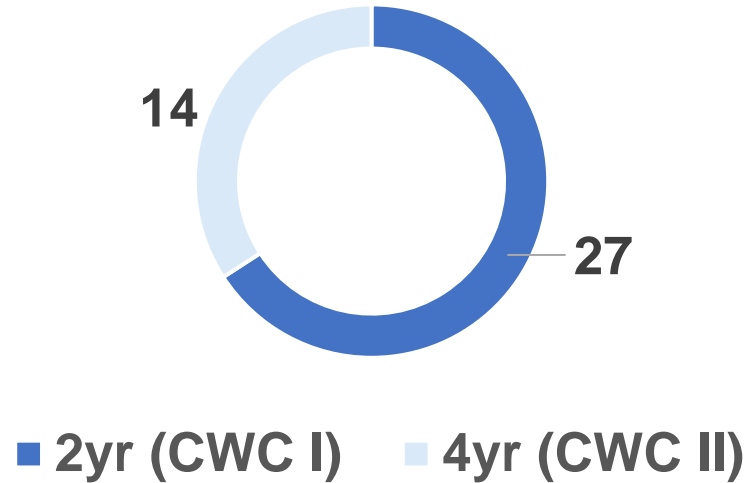
## Additional Competencies

*Demonstrated areas of knowledge to be evaluated against during field experience*

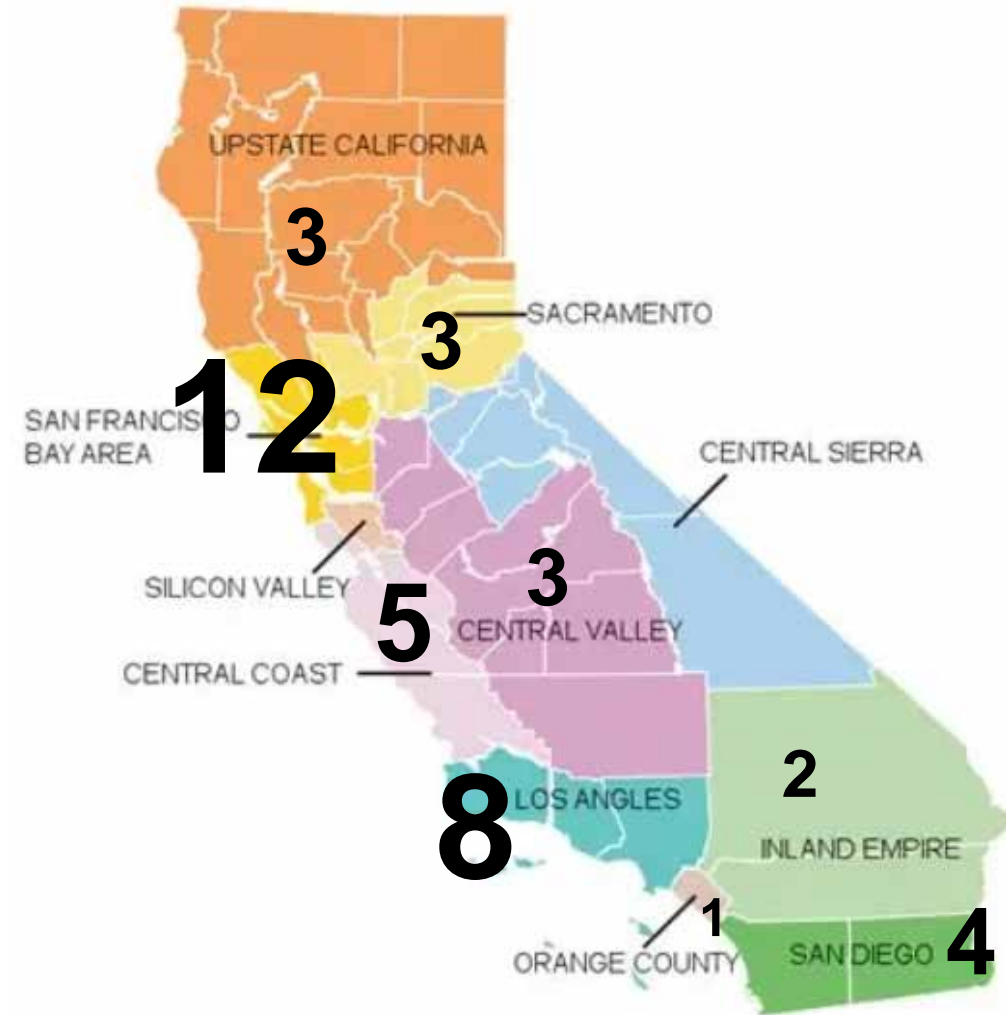
- 7 Cultural responsiveness, humility, and mitigating implicit bias
- 8 Professionalism, ethics, and legal mandates
- 9 Communication
- 10 Operating in role and different environments

# HCAI Designated Education Programs

## Grant Awardees



41 programs are currently developing their [designated programs](#), aligning their curricula with CWC competencies.



# Looking Ahead

## **Certified Wellness Coach Apprenticeship**

In partnership with the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO), HCAI is funding a demonstration project to stand up CWC apprentices throughout the state. Investing in this infrastructure and promoting scalability will provide long-term sustainability mechanisms for training apprentices to enter the workforce as CWCs.

## **Future Funding**

Potential scholarship opportunities for CWC students in 2026. Stay tuned!

## **Recertification**

Beginning early 2026, CWCs will begin recertifying to maintain their certification and continue to support California's children and youth. Learn more [here](#).

# Open Doors Overview

The Open Doors training program is designed to support young people with substance use and behavioral health challenges building a proactive, informed network for safer communities.

As of November 2025:

- 22 trainings have been completed
- 421 people have completed the full training
- ~29 upcoming trainings with bookings into August 2026



# Youth Mental Health Academy Overview

## About YMHA

The Youth Mental Health Academy (YMHA) is a 14-month program for students ages 15 to 18 that are interested in behavioral health careers.

YMHA is a statewide initiative powered by the Child Mind Institute to prepare the next generation of diverse leaders in mental health.

## Program Reach

- 2400+ students
- 480+ Capstone projects
- 700+ interns across 103 placements (cohort 1 & 2)
- Virtual pilot launched in Summer 2025 to provide expanded regional engagement and visibility in hard-to-reach areas

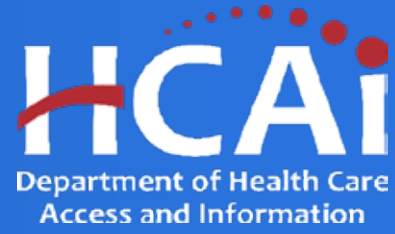
## Impact

- Students gain confidence and belonging
- Mentors inspire the next generation
- Students express gratitude for access

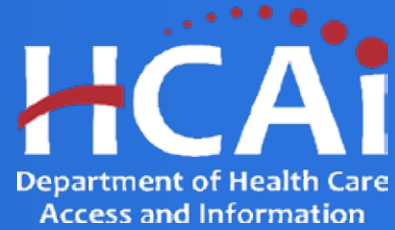
# Looking Ahead

As a part of the 2025 budget act, an additional \$2M in funding was made available to YMHA for an Los Angeles cohort.

YMHA anticipates that this funding will be able to prepare ~400 students during the summer of 2026 for a career in behavioral health.



**Questions?**



# Thank You

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