

Certified Wellness Coach (CWC) Model

February 2025

Outline

Overview of Certified Wellness Coach Profession

Detail on Certified Wellness Coach Profession



The Need for Certified Wellness Coaches

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

As part of that funding and plan, **HCAI was tasked to design and implement the Certified Wellness Coach workforce.**

The Certified Wellness Coach 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 profession is both a desirable occupation and a stepping-stone to more advanced roles.

Development of Certified Wellness Coach Model

The development of the Certified Wellness Coach profession was informed by a review of published behavioral health articles, stakeholder interviews, and stakeholder design workshops

Illustrative Timeline of Certified Wellness Coach Development Process

	Month	Activity			
2021	Dec.	Extensive research literature review	Publications reviewed include existing behavioral health program manuals, academic journals, mental health advocacy group publications, and state and national-level behavioral health data		
	Jan.				
2022	Feb.	Conducted interviews with industry leaders	50+ interviews conducted with government partners, education leaders, and behavioral health programs nationwide		
	Mar.				
	Apr.		Developed initial Wellness Coach design options		
	May	Stakeholder groups participated in numerous workshops and interviews include healthcare workforce, training providers, education workforce, and parents/youth			
	Jun.	Tested design options with stakeholder groups			
	Jul.				
	Aug.	Refined profession design			
	Sept.				
	Ongoing	Program development and implementation			

Overview of Certified Wellness Coaches

Prerequisites to Enter Program



Education Program



Received Upon Completion



Services Offered



Certified Wellness Coach I

- High school diploma or equivalent
- Associate's degree
- Field/Work Experience (Education Pathway: 400 hours; Workforce Pathway: 1,350 hours)
- Wellness Coach I certification
- Focus on education related to wellness promotion, life skills, and mental health literacy
- Provide limited individual and group support

Certified Wellness Coach II

- Wellness Coach I certification or associate's degree in related field¹
- Bachelor's degree
- Field/Work Experience (Education Pathway: 800 hours; Workforce Pathway: 2,700 hours)²
- Wellness Coach II certification
- Focus on individual and group support related to wellness education, goal setting, life skills, and coping skills
- Perform the same core services as Certified Wellness Coach I with additional expertise

All Certified Wellness Coaches will:

- Serve children and youth ages 0 – 25
- Operate as part of a care team
- Offer six core services, including:
 - Wellness promotion and education
 - Screening
 - Care coordination
 - Individual support
 - Group support
 - Crisis referral
- Operate under the direction of and coordination with a Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) credentialed or licensed professional

1. Applicants can enter directly into bachelor's degree without listed prerequisites but will be require to complete Wellness Coach I training requirements throughout course of study. 2. Hours from Wellness Coach I certification apply towards total and can include hours earned as a CWC I.

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- **Scope of Services and Competencies**
- Recruitment and Education
- Operating Model
- Career Lattice



Services and Competencies of the Certified Wellness Coach

Services

Activities core to the Certified Wellness Coach profession

- 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 on-the-job training

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

Scope of Services for Certified Wellness Coaches (1 of 2)

Core Activity ¹	Certified Wellness Coach I Scope of Services <i>Under direction of PPS² or licensed professional</i>	Certified Wellness Coach II Scope of Services <i>Under direction of PPS² or licensed professional</i>
1 Wellness Promotion and Education	- Offer services to groups or classrooms focused on: - Wellness promotion and education (e.g., building positive relationships, bullying prevention, diet and exercise in relation to BH) - Mental health literacy (e.g., symptom recognition, help-seeking strategies, how to provide support) - Life skills (e.g., stress management, time management, problem-solving)	- Offer services to groups or classrooms focused on activities listed in CWC I profession and: - Behavior activation, including identifying, engaging in, and evaluating activities that promote positive emotions and well-being. - Supporting and practicing overcoming maladaptive thinking patterns identified in higher-level care. - Distraction strategies (e.g., redirection techniques, mindfulness) - Emotional regulation (e.g., emotion recognition and understanding, regulation strategies)
2 Screening	- Support youth completing behavioral health screenings (e.g., answer questions, hand-off screenings to BH professionals) - Identify and referring BH needs of youth to BH providers in school or broader organization setting - Coordinates universal screening programs in schools or other community-based organizations per SAMHSA guidelines³	Facilitates universal screening programs in school or other community-based organizations per SAMHSA guidelines⁴
3 Care Coordination and Extension	- Connect individuals to internal and external BH resources (e.g., local/regional/national organizations, school or broader organization resources, outpatient providers, residential programs, crisis response resources) as well as social services (e.g., food or housing programs) as needed - Facilitate communication with other professionals (e.g., BH providers, school personnel) that are providing support and care to youth, including connecting individuals to licensed providers so all care team members work together and operate at the top of their license or certification - Provide additional support to providers, school, or broader organization personnel, including BH related administrative activities (e.g., billing support) and extension of non-clinical or clinical BH support	

1. All activities will be carried out in a manner that reflects cultural concordance. 2. Pupil Personnel Services 3. Coordination refers to the support of day-to-day logistics, such as scheduling, communication, answering questions, and preparing materials under the direction of qualified professionals. 4. Facilitation refers to the operation of screening sessions under the direction of qualified professionals, such as providing instruction and support, collecting and recording data, and ensuring a safe and comfortable environment.

Scope of Services for Certified Wellness Coach (2 of 2)

Core Activity ¹	Certified Wellness Coach I Scope of Services <i>Under direction of PPS¹ or licensed professional</i>	Certified Wellness Coach II Scope of Services <i>Under direction of PPS¹ or licensed professional</i>
4 Individual Support	• Provide brief check-ins (~5-15 min) and scheduled meetings (~30 min) that provide emotional support and enhance wellness; individual support may include: • Wellness education (e.g., basics of BH symptoms, diet, hydration, and exercise in relation to BH) • Goal setting/planning (e.g., increasing movement, sleep hygiene) • Life skills (e.g., stress management, time management, problem-solving)	• Activities of the Certified Wellness Coach I scope of services, and: • Behavior activation, including identifying, engaging in, and evaluating activities that promote positive emotions and well-being. • Supporting and practicing overcoming maladaptive thinking patterns identified in higher-level care. • Distraction strategies (e.g., redirection techniques, mindfulness) • Emotional regulation (e.g., emotion recognition and understanding, regulation strategies)
5 Group Support	• Deliver small group programming to enhance wellness and life skills (e.g., social-emotional skills, stress management, time management, organization, problem-solving)	• Activities of the Certified Wellness Coach I scope of services, and: • Enhance awareness of the most common BH conditions to promote understanding, reduce stigma, and foster a more informed and empathetic community
6 Crisis Referral	• Adhere to a standardized protocol when responding to signs of crisis in the school or broader organization setting • Identify potential risks and refer to the appropriate qualified BH provider or supervisor • Provide emotional support and engage in warm handoffs with the appropriate qualified BH provider or supervisor for youth who are waiting to be seen for crisis services	

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Example Recruiting Considerations for Certified Wellness Coach Profession

Recruiting Areas of Interest

Who

- **Diverse set of applicants** (e.g., age, race, ethnicity, LGBTQ+, languages spoken, socioeconomic status, experience type)
- **Experience with youth** (e.g., paraprofessional, classified school personnel) **or desire to work with youth**
- **Demonstrated competency in foundational skills and aptitudes** (e.g., written/oral communication, empathy, listening skills)
- **Applicants with a diverse range of educational backgrounds** (e.g., high school diploma, GED, Associate degree, Bachelor degree)

Where

- Geographic locations with **demonstrated shortages of mental health professionals**
 - Counties that have mental health professional shortage area (MHPSA) **scores of 16 or higher¹**
 - Counties that **do not have existing BH training programs**
- Areas with youth populations of diverse backgrounds and/or socioeconomically disadvantaged communities
 - Areas designated as **California Healthy Place Index (“HPI”) first and second quartile**

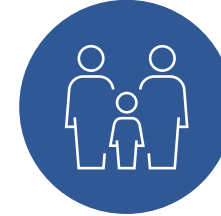
1. Mental HPSA Score was developed by the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) in determining priorities for the assignment of clinicians. The scores range from 0 to 26 where the higher the score, the greater the priority.

Potential Applicant Pipeline to Enter Into Education Programs

Non-exhaustive



People who are currently working in healthcare or behavioral health
(e.g., community health workers and peer personnel)



People in unrelated entry-level roles that have a desire to work in behavioral health and/or with children and youth



People currently working in schools, such as paraprofessionals or administrative staff



Recent high school graduates with an interest in behavioral health



Individuals in colleges, either pursuing a degree or working on campus

HCAI-Designated Education Program Structure: CWC I

Program Area	Credits Earned ¹	Example Coursework & Content
Introduction to Behavioral Health	60 credits	• Introduction to psychology • Introduction to social work • Introduction to case management • Child & adolescent development
Additional Education <i>(includes didactics & experiential learning to ensure individuals have the skills, knowledge, & abilities to be workforce ready)</i>		• Human behavior • Basic needs assessment • Screening • Crisis management • Disability approaches • Substance use disorder • Case management, resource linkage • Coaching and counseling frameworks² • Reflective practice (e.g., self-care, self-awareness) • Documentation basics • Cultural responsiveness, humility & implicit bias • Social determinants of health • Professionalism, ethics, legal mandates • Operating in different environments • Community outreach • Trauma-responsive care • Building effective care relationships • Self-integration in BH fields • Individual wellness plans
Field Experience		• 150 hours minimum of supervised experience including direct services, supervision, other clinical related activities, and competency evaluations⁴
Certification		• Apply for and maintain certification through HCAI after completing program. Recertification to be completed every two (2) years

1. Credits from other programs can be transferred if they meet the education institution's requirements. 2. Includes, but not limited to, social emotional learning, active listening, relationship building, creating affirming environments, coaching practice in live settings. 3. Includes, but not limited to, focus on people of color, immigrant, LGBTQ+, Native, limited English proficiency populations. 4. Any combination of hours from field practicum, volunteer hours, and work experience qualify.

HCAI-Designated Education Program Structure: CWC II

Program Area	Credits Earned ¹	Example Coursework & Content
Certified Wellness Coach I Competency	<i>n/a</i>	No additional coursework required
Advanced Behavioral Health	60 credits	• Counseling principles • Lifespan development • Abnormal psychology • Child and family welfare • Social determinants of health
Additional Education <i>(includes didactics & experiential learning to ensure individuals have the skills, knowledge, & abilities to be workforce ready)</i>		• Advanced evidence-based practices (e.g., CBT, motivational interviewing, trauma-informed care) for individual and group support • Supervision • Advanced crisis management / suicide prevention² • Reflective practice (e.g., self-care, self-awareness) • Secondary trauma / trauma-informed care • Neurodivergence • Disability approaches II • Substance use disorder II
Field Experience		• 300 hours minimum of supervised experience including direct services, supervision, other clinical related activities, and competency evaluations³
Certification		• Apply for and maintain certification through HCAI after completing program. Recertification to be completed every two (2) years

1. Credits from other programs can be transferred if they meet the education institution's requirements 2. Includes training in suicide impact assessments. 3. Hours from Wellness Coach I education apply towards the total. Any combination of hours from field practicum, volunteer hours, and work experience qualify.

Certification Requirements – Education Pathway

	Wellness Coach I	Wellness Coach II
Intended for	Individuals interested in entering the behavioral health field	
Degree Required	Associates degree	Bachelor's degree
Majors Accepted	- Social Work - Human Services - Addiction Studies - Psychology	- Social Work - Human Services - Addiction Studies - Psychology
Field Experience Needed ¹	400 hours total (150 hour minimum) Experience must be providing direct pre-clinical behavioral health services to clients in school-linked/school-based organizations, non-profits, community organizations, and/or health centers/clinics within the last six years.	800 hours total (300 hour minimum)²

1. Any hours not completed during the degree program can be completed post-graduation via relevant internship, volunteer, or work experience. 2. Hours from Wellness Coach I certification apply towards total.

Certification Requirements – Workforce Pathway

	Wellness Coach I	Wellness Coach II
Intended for	• Professionals who are currently part of the behavioral health workforce	
Degree Required	• Associates degree	• Bachelor's degree
Majors Accepted	• Any degree	• Any degree
Field Experience Needed ¹	• 1,350 hours	• 2,700 hours ²
	Experience must be providing direct pre-clinical behavioral health services to children and youth through age 25 in school-linked/school-based organizations, non-profits, community organizations, and/or health centers/ clinics within the last six years.	

1. Experience can be achieved from any combination of relevant hours from an individual's degree program, volunteer hours, and/or on-the-job hours, inclusive of previous experience earned within 6 years of certification. 2. Hours from Wellness Coach I certification apply towards total.

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Example Guiding Principles & Activities for Certified Wellness Coaches

		Example Activities Related to Certified Wellness Coach Professions	
Example Guiding Principles		In scope	Out of Scope
 Prioritize BH-related Support		Individual and group support for students with behavioral concerns	Assessing, diagnosing, or providing clinical intervention or treatment
		Understanding how academic advising services are provided to best support youth	Providing academic advising services
		Facilitating promotion/prevention programming, which can include health education related to BH	Facilitating system-level programming or creating specialized curricula
 Prioritize BH-related Administrative Support		Documenting activities related to BH individual and group support	Documenting activities related to student enrollment
		Scheduling BH-related appointments	Developing or administering the master schedule; scheduling academic advising appointments
		Coordinating/Assisting with broad BH screening tools	Administering academic state or interim assessments
 Prioritize BH-related Care Coordination		Connecting individuals to BH support resources (e.g., outpatient therapy, support groups) and social services as needed	Providing medical referrals (e.g., ENT, PCP)
		Coordinating with other BH providers , including around the provision of BH services, to students with IEPs	Administering and coordinating individual education plans ("IEP")

Example Sites for Certified Wellness Coach Services

☐ Applies across ages

Example site	Early childhood ¹	Elementary school ²	Middle and high school ³	Transition aged ⁴
Schools	• Preschool programs • Head start	• Primary school campus	• High school campus	• Community colleges • Four year colleges
Community-based Organizations	• Community centers	• YMCA • Boys and Girls Club • Community centers	• Community centers • After-school programs	• Community centers • Mobile crisis
Health Centers	• Primary care • Tribal health programs	• Primary care clinics • Tribal health programs • Hospital specialty clinics • Residential treatment centers • Partial hospitalization programs • Crisis service providers • Federally qualified health centers • Rural health clinics • School health centers		
Government	• Childcare and development programs • AIMSS⁵	• Juvenile justice • Homeless service providers • Foster care service providers • Home-based & home-visiting programs		
Telehealth	• Technology/telecommunication solutions to support specific groups (e.g., rural areas, foster care system) • After-hours services and easy-to-reach services for all groups • DHCS Platform			

1. Ages 0-5. 2. Elementary schools with children aged 6-12. 3. Public middle and high schools with youth aged 13-18.
4. Ages 18-25. 5. American Indian Maternal Support Services.

Example Criteria for Sites

- **Sites that have direct youth engagement** (e.g., elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools).
- Sites that **promote sustainable impact**, including those that:
 - **Youth frequently occupy**, would want to try behavioral health services, and/or **trust the current services and individuals**
 - **Value coach services** and offer continued mentorship and professional development
 - **Employ staff knowledgeable about behavioral health services** and motivated to integrate coaches
- Consider sites that **promote feasibility**, including those that:
 - Serve youth with **needs that are appropriate for coaches' level of education and training**
 - **Offer infrastructure that supports scalability** (e.g., telehealth)

*Non-exhaustive

Example Model for Certified Wellness Coach Supervision

■ Supervision model based on stakeholder input

Area	Example Model Options More than one option may be appropriate depending on the circumstances				Considerations
Number of Individuals	Individual (One-to-one supervision)		Small groups (Example: 4 coaches to 1 supervisor)		One-on-one supervision may require more time from the supervisor, particularly if they are responsible for multiple coaches
Supervision Cadence Options	Supervisor in all interactions	Daily touchpoints ¹	Weekly touchpoints ²	As-needed touchpoints	A licensing board may require supervisors to oversee a particular percentage of accrued clinical hours for a Certified Wellness Coach
Supervisor Type ³	Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) ⁴		Qualified BH provider ⁵		Licensing boards may have pre-determined supervision formats Supervisor availability may vary

Other Considerations

Supervisor qualifications (e.g., years post-licensure/credential) and competencies (e.g., cultural competence, anti-discrimination practices) may vary

There may be clinical record-keeping laws required of the supervisee (Certified Wellness Coach) (e.g., what information should be included in the record, how long records should be maintained)

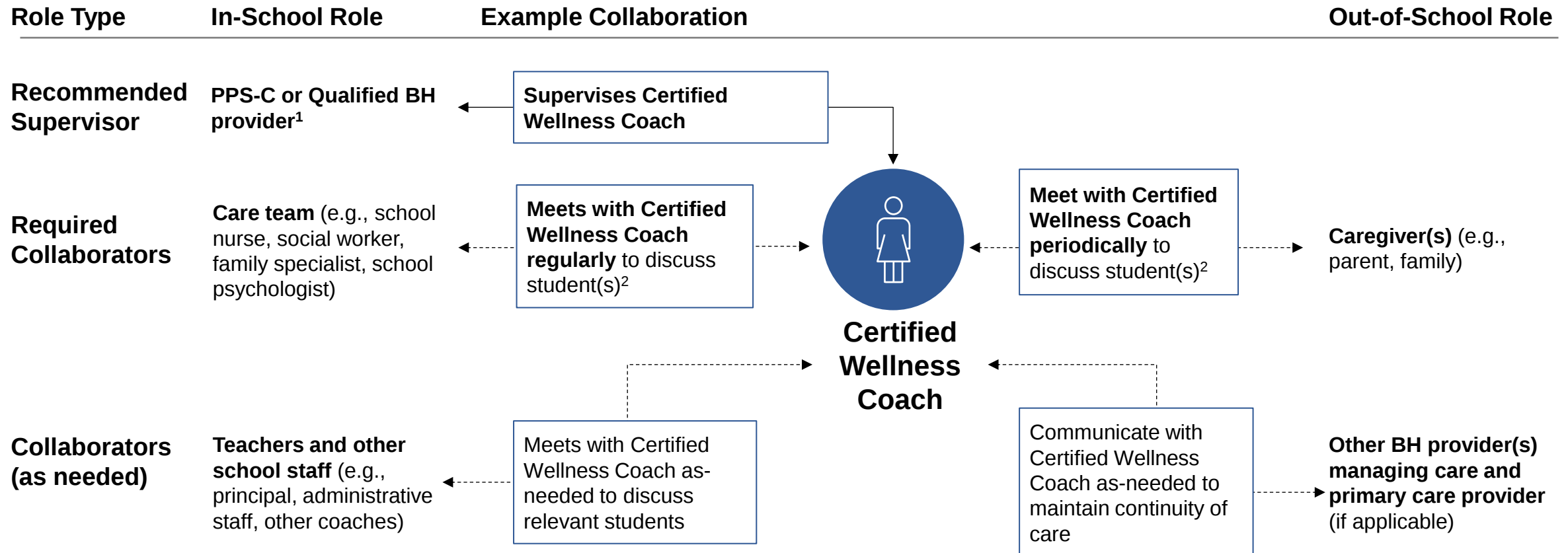
There may be documentation requirements for supervisory activities (e.g., discussion of client progress and changes in treatment plan)

Supervisors may be required to be employed by a particular agency/practice

1. Scheduled daily meetings for ~15-20 minutes for less advanced Certified Wellness Coaches 2. Scheduled weekly meetings for ~30-45 minutes 3. Suggested supervisors. Employer to determine best direct supervisor based on available resources and capacity. 4. Recommend supervisor in school settings 5. Recommended supervisor in community settings

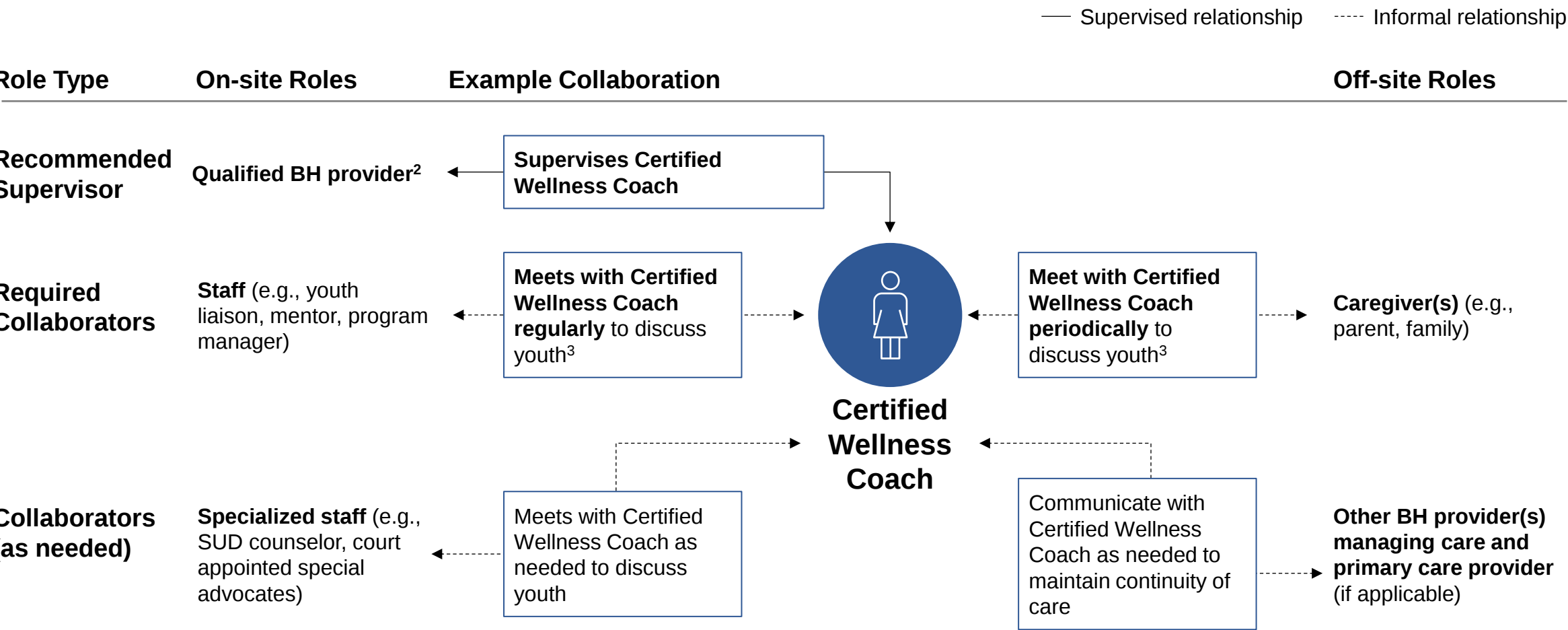
School Settings: Example BH-related Activities by Role Type

— Supervisory relationship ---- Informal relationship



1. Includes licensed and unlicensed PPS professionals. Supervisor or members of care team may allocate time to several schools throughout the district and may not always be on-site. 2. Student(s) include those under the care of the care team or caregiver, only with appropriate permissions.

Community Settings¹: Example BH-related Activities by Role Type



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Example Behavioral Health Career Lattice

Minimum Education Level Required ¹		Illustrative Behavioral Health Lattice with Example Behavioral Health Roles						
Supervised Professional	Certificate	Other non-BH roles		Community health worker		Peer support ²		SUD counselor
	Associates	Certified Wellness Coach I						
	Bachelors	Certified Wellness Coach II			Social worker			
	Masters	School counselor (incl. PPS ³)	School psychologist (incl. PPS ³)	Social worker (incl. PPS ³)	Practicing therapist or counselor working towards licensure	Other supervised BH roles ⁴		
Independent Practitioner	Licensure	Licensed clinical social worker (incl. PPS ³)	Licensed educational psychologists (incl. PPS ³)	Licensed marriage and family therapist (incl. PPS ³)	Licensed professional clinical counselor (incl. PPS ³)	Licensed school nurse		
	PhD	Psychologist (incl. PPS ³)						
	MD	Psychiatrist, primary care providers						

1. Or degree equivalent 2. Includes peer support roles (e.g., peer specialist, family support specialist, recovery coach, peer navigators)
 3. Pupil Personnel Services 4. Examples include organizational psychology, behavioral analysis, physician assistant, and others

Select Observations

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

Illustrative Scope of Practice for Select Non-Clinical BH Professionals

Role	Description of Scope of Practice
Certified Wellness Coach I and II	Support non-clinical behavioral health needs of children and youth (ages 0 – 25) , with a focus on wellness promotion and preventative services
Peer Support Specialist	Peer Support Specialists provide recovery-oriented, culturally appropriate services that promote engagement, socialization, self-sufficiency, self-advocacy, natural supports and are trauma aware (source: CalMHSA)
Community Health Worker	Serve as a link between health and social services and the community to increase access to and improve the quality of services (source: CHCF)
Bachelor's-level Social Worker	Prepares individuals for generalist practice positions (such as casework), where they engage with clients (e.g., individuals, families, communities), assess their needs, link them to services, and monitor their progress (source: CSWE)