

BH-CONNECT Workforce Initiative: Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Scholarship Program

HCAI Health Workforce Development

December 4, 2025

Agenda

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- Opening Remarks & HCAI Overview
- Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Scholarship Program: Webinar Objectives
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- Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Scholarship Program Overview
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Housekeeping and Introduction

Before we begin, just a few quick notes to help you get the most out of today's session:

1. Platform: This session is hosted on Zoom Webinar. Your controls are in the toolbar at the bottom of your screen.
2. Q&A: We're using the Q&A feature for all comments and questions. Please type your input at any time. Questions will be moderated before they appear publicly.
3. Recording: Today's session is being recorded. The recording will be available on our website within 7-10 business days

A woman with long dark hair, seen in profile from the chest up, is looking towards a large monitor on the right. The monitor displays a video conference with several participants. The background is a bright, out-of-focus interior space. The overall image has a soft, slightly faded aesthetic.

Opening Remarks & HCAI Overview

Angela Brand, Behavioral Health and Policy Section Chief

HCAI's Vision and Mission



Vision

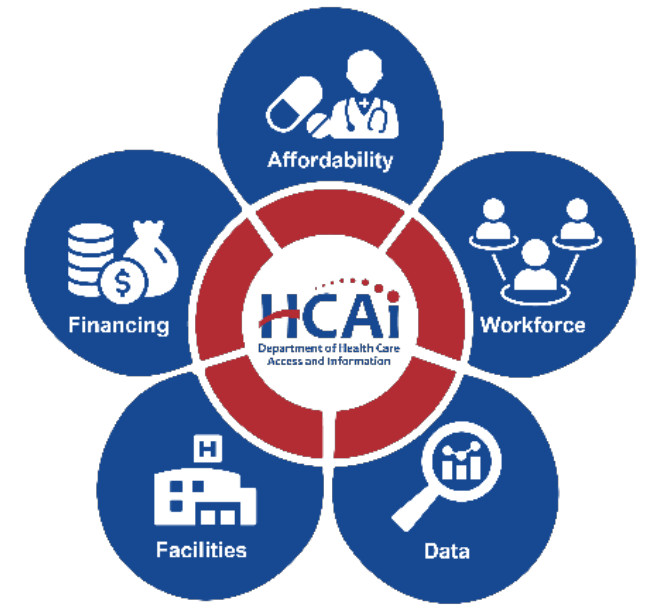
A healthier California where all receive equitable, affordable, and quality health care.

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

- **Facilities:** Monitor the construction, renovation, and seismic safety of California's hospitals and skilled nursing facilities.
- **Financing:** Provide loan insurance for non-profit healthcare facilities to develop or expand services.
- **Workforce:** Expand and diversify California's health workforce for underserved areas and populations.
- **Data:** Collect, manage, analyze, and report actionable information about California's healthcare landscape.
- **Affordability:** Improve health care affordability through data analysis, spending targets, and measures to advance value. Enforce hospital billing protections, and provide generic drugs at a low, transparent price.



Health Workforce Approach and Strategy



HCAI enables the expansion and development of a **health workforce that reflects California and addresses supply shortages and access to care**. We do this by administering programs and funding and publishing actionable data about California's health workforce and training.



Our Programs Cut Across Four Areas

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

Offer programs that provide financial support for:

- Organizations building the workforce pipeline
- Organizations expanding educational capacity
- Individuals pursuing health careers
- Organizations supporting providers and addressing retention



Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Scholarship Program: Webinar Objectives

Angela Brand, Behavioral Health and Policy Section Chief

Webinar Objectives

- Present a high-level overview of the Behavioral Health Community-Based Organized Networks of Equitable Care and Treatment (BH-CONNECT) Demonstration and the BH-CONNECT Workforce Initiative
- Present high-level features of the Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Scholarship Program
- Provide next steps for organizations to spread the word to eligible applicants

A photograph of two women sitting on a couch in a bright, modern interior. The woman on the left is holding a clipboard and pen, looking towards the woman on the right. The woman on the right is resting her chin on her hand, looking back at the first woman. The background is softly blurred, showing a bookshelf and a plant.

Overview of BH-CONNECT and the Workforce Initiative

Federal Approvals to Transform Behavioral Health Care in Medi-Cal

In mid-December, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) received approval from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for the transformative BH-CONNECT initiative. BH-CONNECT grows out of our understanding of the lived experience of Californians with behavioral health needs and data-driven analysis of available services.

- BH-CONNECT seeks to transform California's behavioral health delivery system by **expanding access to highly effective community-based services, strengthening the behavioral health workforce, and ensuring Medi-Cal members receive high quality care.**
 - CMS approved key elements of BH-CONNECT through a new Section 1115 demonstration and a series of new State Plan Amendments (SPAs).

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), 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.
- The state may carry unused workforce initiative expenditure authority from one year to the next. After Demonstration Year 2, the state may redistribute up to 30% of Workforce Initiative funding across programs.



BH-CONNECT Workforce Initiative 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

A man with short dark hair and a beard, wearing a light yellow button-down shirt, is sitting at a desk. He is looking down and smiling slightly while writing in a notebook with a yellow pencil. The background is a blurred office setting with other people and desks.

Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Scholarship Program Overview

Andres Gonzalez, Health Program Specialist

Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Scholarship Program: Goal

The goal of the BH-CONNECT Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Scholarship Program (MBH-SP) is to expand the availability of behavioral health professionals in Medi-Cal safety net settings by supporting scholarships for individuals pursuing behavioral health degrees or certifications.

Funding

- Up to **\$96,900,000** is available for the upcoming MBH-SP cycle launching in February 2026
- Individuals are eligible for up to **\$240,000** in scholarship depending on their profession (see max award by profession slide)
 - These amounts are set by the [BH-CONNECT Special Terms and Conditions section 6.2\(a\)](#)
- Other professions may be eligible if they are delivering behavioral health services covered by Medi-Cal in a Medi-Cal safety net setting

Eligible Professions

- AOD (Alcohol and Other Drugs) Counselor
- Certified Peer Support Specialist
- Certified Wellness Coach
- Community Health Worker
(Promotores/Representative)
- Licensed Clinical Social Worker
- Licensed Clinical Psychologist
- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
- Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor
- Licensed Psychiatric Technician
- Licensed Vocational Nurse
- Nurse Practitioner
- Occupational Therapist
- Physician Assistant
- Registered Nurse

Maximum Award and Service Obligation by Profession

Max Award	Eligible Professions	Service Obligation
\$240,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physician Assistant Nurse Practitioner 	4 years regardless of funding
\$180,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensed Clinical Social Workers Licensed Clinical Psychologist Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor Licensed Psychiatric Technician Licensed Vocational Nurse Occupational Therapist Registered Nurse 	4 years regardless of funding
\$120,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AOD (Alcohol and Other Drugs) Counselor Certified Peer Support Specialist Certified Wellness Coach Community Health Worker (Promotores/Representative) 	<p>\$20,000 or greater: four years</p> <p>\$10,000 to \$20,000: three years</p> <p>Less than \$10,000: two years</p>

Note: Other behavioral health professions will be categorized according to the special terms and conditions (STCs).

Service Obligations

- Licensed, prescribing behavioral health practitioners and non-prescribing licensed or associate level pre-licensure practitioners will serve a 4-year service obligation, regardless of scholarship amount.
- Non-licensed, non-prescribing practitioners will complete a service obligation period based on the following scholarship amounts:
 - \$20,000 or greater: four years
 - \$10,000 to \$20,000: three years
 - Less than \$10,000: two years

Medi-Cal Safety Net Settings

All service obligations must be served in a Medi-Cal safety net setting which is defined as one of the following:

- Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC)
- Community Mental Health Centers (CMHC) as defined and certified by the [California Department of Public Health](#)
- Rural Health Clinics (RHC)
- Settings with the following payer mix:
 - Hospitals with 40% or higher Medicaid and/or uninsured population
 - Rural hospitals with 30% or higher Medicaid and/or uninsured population
 - Other behavioral health settings (e.g., certified treatment programs) with 40% or higher Medicaid and/or uninsured population

Other Behavioral Health Settings*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Treatment Facility (Must hold a DHCS mental health program approval) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualifying provider organizations that deliver primarily field-based or telehealth Medi-Cal behavioral health services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indian Health Care providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School-based behavioral health setting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent licensed practitioner contracted with a behavioral health plan or managed care plan for specialty or non-specialty behavioral health services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program/Children's Crisis Residential Program (Must hold a DHCS mental health program approval)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental Health Rehabilitation Center (MHRC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skilled Nursing Facility with a Special Treatment Program for mental health (Must hold a DHCS mental health program approval)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narcotic Treatment Programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Rehabilitation Facility/Program (Must hold a DHCS mental health program approval)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outpatient behavioral health clinics (other than certified outpatient SUD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substance Use Disorder Treatment Facility (residential)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary care or other clinic setting with co-located behavioral health services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substance Use Disorder Treatment Program (outpatient)

* Other Behavioral Health Settings must deliver Medi-Cal behavioral health services and must meet the payor mix requirements in the BH-CONNECT STCs. All Medi-Cal safety net settings will go through a verification process.

Funding Categories

- MBH-SP funding **can** be used for:
 - Tuition and fees
 - Textbooks and supplies required for the program
- MBH-SP funding **cannot** be used for:
 - Living expenses, including on- and off-campus housing
 - Childcare
 - Transportation
 - Other costs not directly related to the program or coursework

Key Dates

Event	Date
Application Opens	February 2, 2026
Application Deadline	March 16, 2026
Anticipated Award Notice Date	June/July 2026
Anticipated Grant Agreement Start Date	August 2026



Questions and Answers

Chris Roina, Lead Communications Analyst

Next Steps

- We will send a follow-up email to all attendees. This email will link to a recording of this webinar and contain an informational flyer. We encourage you to distribute this flyer to your networks and with students in your eligible degree programs.
- Join our [mailing list](#) to stay up-to-date on HCAI scholarship programs. Be sure to select "Behavioral Health Programs" when you subscribe.



Closing Remarks

Angela Brand, Behavioral Health and Policy Section Chief

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Contact Us!



BH-CONNECT Helpline 916-326-3899



MBHSP@hcai.ca.gov

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#HealthFacilities #HealthInformation**