

# **BH-CONNECT Workforce Initiative: Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Student Loan Repayment Program**

**HCAI Health Workforce Development**

July 10, 2025

# Agenda

- Housekeeping and Introduction
- Opening Remarks and HCAI Overview
- Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Student Loan Repayment Program: Webinar Objectives
- Overview of BH-CONNECT and the Workforce Initiative
- Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Student Loan Repayment Program Overview
- Questions and Answers
- Closing Remarks

# Housekeeping and Introduction

- This webinar is hosted in Microsoft Teams, if you're not familiar with the platform, you can find chat and view controls in the menu bar at the top of your screens
- The chat option will be open for asking questions during the Q&A session, which is at the end of this webinar
- We will try to answer as many questions as possible but may need to defer situation-specific questions to the grant guide
- This webinar will be recorded and will be available within 5 business days

A woman with long dark hair, seen from the side, is looking at a computer monitor. The monitor displays a video conference with several participants. The background is a bright, out-of-focus window with a brick wall visible outside.

# Opening Remarks & HCAI Overview

**Kim Ramson, Grants Management Section Chief**

# HCAI's Vision and Mission



## Vision

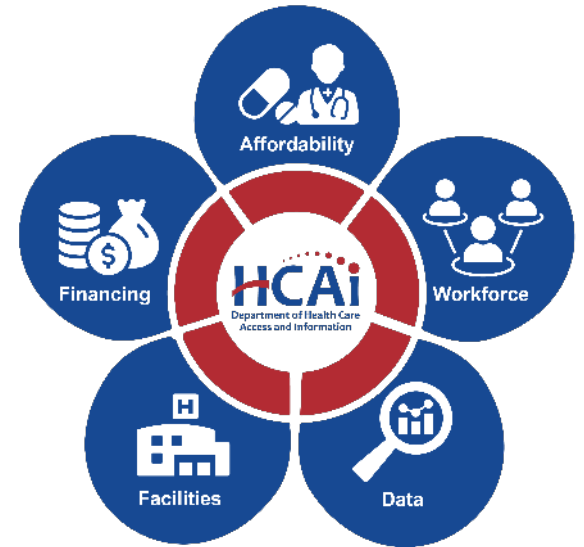
A healthier California where all receive equitable, affordable, and quality health care.

## 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's diversity while addressing supply shortages and inequities**. We do this by administering programs and funding and publishing actionable data about California's health workforce and training.



BEHAVIORAL  
HEALTH



NURSING  
& MIDWIFERY



PRIMARY  
CARE



ORAL  
HEALTH

**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 Student Loan Repayment Program: Webinar Objectives**

**Kim Ramson, Grants Management Section Chief**



# Webinar Objectives

- Present high-level overview of BH-CONNECT and the BH-CONNECT Workforce Initiative
- Provide relevant information to potential applicants of the Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Student Loan Repayment Program

A photograph of two women sitting on a couch in a bright, modern office setting. The woman on the left is wearing a light-colored blazer and is looking towards the woman on the right. The woman on the right is wearing a white cable-knit sweater and is looking back at the first woman. They appear to be in a professional conversation. In the background, there are bookshelves with books and a whiteboard.

# **Overview of BH-CONNECT and the Workforce Initiative**

**Kim Ramson, Grants Management Section Chief**

# 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).

# Goals of BH-CONNECT

- **Expand the continuum of community-based services and evidence-based practices (EBPs)** available through Medi-Cal for children, youth and adults living with mental health and substance use disorders (SUD).
- **Strengthen family-based services and supports** for children and youth living with significant behavioral health needs, including children and youth involved in child welfare.
- **Incentivize behavioral health plans (BHPs) to improve access, health outcomes, and invest in delivery system reforms** to better support Medi-Cal members living with significant behavioral health needs.
- **Strengthen the workforce** needed to deliver community-based behavioral health services and EBPs to members living with behavioral health needs.
- **Access federal funds for short-term stays in facility-based care**, but only for BHPs that commit to providing robust community-based services and meeting quality of care standards for such stays.
- **Promote transitions out of facility-based care** and support successful transitions to community-based care settings and community reintegration.
- **Promote improved health outcomes**, community integration, treatment and recovery for individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and experiencing critical transitions.
- **Improve stability** for members going through vulnerable periods (including but not limited to those living with significant behavioral health issues) through transitional rent services, reducing their risk of returning to institutional care or experiencing homelessness.

# BH-CONNECT Workforce Initiative

- The Workforce Initiative will support 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, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) and HCAI will partner to invest up to \$1.9 billion in five workforce programs.
- Recipients of workforce funding will 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



# Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Student Loan Repayment Program Overview

**Christian Jones, Policy Analyst, Behavioral Health and Policy**

# MBH-SLRP Program:

## Goal:

The goal of the BH-CONNECT Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Student Loan Repayment Program (MBH-SLRP) is to expand the availability of behavioral health professionals in Medi-Cal safety net settings by alleviating student loan burdens and incentivizing practice in these settings.

## Funding:

- Up to **\$90,100,000** in total is available for this year's MBH-SLRP cycle
- Awardees are eligible for up to **\$240,000** in loan repayment 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\(a\)](#)
- Grantees cannot receive an award higher than their eligible student loan debt at the time of payment

# Eligible Professions

- Addiction Medicine Physician
- Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Counselors
- Associate Clinical Social Worker
- Associate Marriage and Family Therapist
- Associate Professional Clinical Counselor
- Certified Peer Support Specialist
- Certified Wellness Coach
- Community Health Worker (Promotores/Representatives)
- Licensed Clinical Psychologist
- Licensed Clinical Social Worker
- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
- Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor
- Licensed Psychiatric Technician
- Licensed Vocational Nurse
- Mental Health Rehabilitation Specialist
- Nurse Practitioner
- Occupational Therapist
- Physician Assistant
- Psychology Associate
- Psychiatrists (including Addiction and Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist)
- Registered Nurse

# Maximum Award and Service Obligation by Profession

Max Award	Eligible Professions		Service Obligation
\$240,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addiction Medicine Physician</li> <li>Addiction Psychiatrists</li> <li>Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nurse Practitioner</li> <li>Physician Assistant</li> <li>Psychiatrists</li> </ul>	4 years regardless of funding
\$180,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associate Clinical Social Worker</li> <li>Associate Marriage and Family Therapist</li> <li>Associate Professional Clinical Counselor</li> <li>Licensed Clinical Psychologist</li> <li>Licensed Clinical Social Worker</li> <li>Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor</li> <li>Licensed Psychiatric Technician</li> <li>Licensed Vocational Nurse</li> <li>Occupational Therapist</li> <li>Psychology Associates</li> <li>Registered Nurse</li> </ul>	4 years regardless of funding
\$120,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AOD (Alcohol and Other Drugs) Counselors</li> <li>Certified Peer Support Specialist</li> <li>Certified Wellness Coach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Health Worker (Promotores/Representatives)</li> <li>Mental Health Rehabilitation Specialists</li> </ul>	\$20,000 or greater: 4 years \$10,000 to \$20,000: 3 years Less than \$10,000: 2 years



# MBH-SLRP: Medi-Cal Safety Net Settings

**All service obligations must be served full-time 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)
- 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

- Community Treatment Facility (Must hold a DHCS mental health program approval)
- Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU)
- Indian Health Care providers
- Independent licensed practitioner contracted with a behavioral health plan or managed care plan for specialty or non-specialty behavioral health services
- Mental Health Rehabilitation Center (MHRC)
- Narcotic Treatment Programs
- Outpatient behavioral health clinics (other than certified outpatient SUD)
- Primary care or other clinic setting with co-located behavioral health services
- Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF)
- Qualifying provider organizations that deliver primarily field-based or telehealth Medi-Cal behavioral health services
- School-based behavioral health setting
- Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program/Children's Crisis Residential Program (Must hold a DHCS mental health program approval)
- Skilled Nursing Facility with a Special Treatment Program for mental health (Must hold a DHCS mental health program approval)
- Social Rehabilitation Facility/Program (Must hold a DHCS mental health program approval)
- Substance Use Disorder Treatment Facility (residential)
- 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.

# Full-Time Employment Policy

- In accordance with section 6.1 of the [BH CONNECT Special Terms and Conditions](#) HCAI cannot permit a grantee to work less than full-time in a Medi-Cal safety net setting.
- HCAI defines full-time as a minimum of **32** hours per week providing direct client care or **30** hours per week of direct care in a school-based behavioral health setting.
- Direct client care includes behavioral health services such as prevention, early intervention, assessment, treatment, counseling, procedures, patient self-care, patient education, and documentation relating to patient encounters being treated by or suspected of needing behavioral health services; Direct client care includes face-to-face care, telehealth-based care, and first-line supervision.
- To fulfill the full-time requirement a grantee may work at one or multiple organizations.



# **MBH-SLRP Key Dates and Application Process**

**Jessica Macintire, Program Officer, Grants Management**

# Key Dates

Event	Date
Application Opened	July 1, 2025
Application Deadline	August 15, 2025, at 3:00 p.m.
Anticipated Award Notice Date	November 2025
Proposed Grant Agreement Start Date	December 2025



# What you need to apply

1. Your National Provider Identifier (NPI) number (if you have one)
2. Your License/Credential/Certification/Registration associated with your eligible profession
3. Unofficial copies of college/university transcripts that document education was a prerequisite for your profession
4. Copies of the latest loan statement for every loan that is specifically associated with your above education
5. Information for two emergency contacts
6. Conflict of Interest Letter (if applicable)

# Application Components

The application has eleven sections:

1. Affirmations
2. Licenses, Associate Registrations, Certification, etc.
3. Education
4. Service Obligation
5. Conflict of Interest
6. Employment
7. Loan Information
8. Additional Questions
9. Additional Contacts
10. Profile Confirmation
11. Confirmation

# Employer Verification

- In the application, applicants must provide a contact for their employer(s).
- This contact(s) will be sent an email asking them to fill out an online employer verification form. This form will be used to determine site eligibility, eligibility of the applicant's profession, and compliance with the full-time work policy.
- Your application is **NOT** complete until your employer(s) returns the employer verification form. Please ensure that you give your employer(s) enough time to complete this form.
- Those who are awarded will have to submit an employer verification form every six months.

# Post-Award and Payment Provisions

- Payments will be made directly to the grantee's loan servicer, **NOT** the grantee. Payment will be issued sometime between December 2025 - December 2026.
- The grantee is responsible for paying their loan obligations before the award payment is issued and must continue making payments if there is a remaining balance.
- The grantee must notify HCAI immediately of any changes or delay in completing their service obligation.
- HCAI expects the grantee will begin performance of their obligations on the start date in the grant agreement.
- HCAI cannot provide tax advice to the grantee. HCAI are not tax professionals and tax consequences may vary depending on the grantee. For this reason, grantees should seek professional tax advice.

# Breach

- HCAI will recoup all payments made on the behalf of the grantee if the grantee fails to perform service and other grant agreement obligations.
- HCAI acknowledges that the service commitment associated with this program may be extensive (up to 4 years). Applicants are therefore encouraged to carefully evaluate their personal and professional goals prior to entering into a grant agreement.
- In the event of a breach of the agreement, the grantee will owe the entirety of their award amount back to HCAI.
- Except in very limited circumstances, HCAI is unable to waive a service obligation after payment to your loan servicer has been issued. Please refer page 23-24 of the grant guide for the waiver policy.





# **MBH-SLRP Evaluation and Scoring Procedures**

**Jessica Macintire, Program Officer, Grants Management**

# Application Evaluation Criteria

- Scoring criteria includes the following items:
  - Languages spoken other than English (15 points)
  - Prior participation in a publicly-funded government program (20 points)
  - Prior experience working in a Medi-Cal Safety Net setting (10 points)
  - HCAI- identified shortage area (5 points)
  - Employment at a Medi-Cal Specialty Behavioral Health Site –operated by, or contracted with, a County Behavioral Health Agency (20 points)
- HCAI intends for these funds to support a geographic and setting/market-type distribution in California. Applicants seeking to support geographic regions and setting/market-types not addressed by other applications may receive preference. HCAI may also give preference to applicants who provide Medi-Cal Specialty Behavioral Health services.

# Resources

Please visit our website to see all the resources that are available:  
[Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Student Loan Repayment Program](#)

By clicking the link, you will be able to see the following:

- MBH-SLRP Grant Guide
- MBH-SLRP Technical Assistance Guide
- FAQ (In development)
- Informational Flyer
- This webinar when it is uploaded



# Questions & Answers

**Chris Roina, Lead Communications Analyst, HCAI**

**Lindsay Bradshaw, BH-CONNECT Project Manager, HCAI**

**Christian Jones, Policy Analyst, Behavioral Health and Policy, HCAI**

**Julie Hudman, Assistant Deputy Director, Behavioral Health, BH-CONNECT, DHCS**

**Jessica Castellon, Health Program Specialist, BH-CONNECT, DHCS**





# Closing Remarks

**Kim Ramson, Grants Management Section Chief**

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#HealthFacilities   #HealthInformation**



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## Contact Us!



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