



California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS)
988-Crisis Policy Advisory Group (PAG)
Sustainable Funding Workgroup Meeting #1
March 5, 2026 | 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. PT (Virtual)

ATTENDEES:

Workgroup Members (Virtual)

- **Alexandria Simpson**, California Department of Health Care Services
- **Amanda Levy**, California Department of Managed Health Care
- **Amanda McConnell**, CalOptima
- **Amber Westphal**, Lake County Behavioral Health Services
- **Anete Millers**, California Association of Health Plans
- **April Giambra**, Lake County Behavioral Health Services
- **Austin Trujillo**, California Department of Managed Health Care
- **Carmen Katsarov**, CalOptima
- **Chrissy Andrus**, Lake County Behavioral Health Services
- **Christie Gonzales**, WellSpace Health
- **Claudia Chavez**, Pala Band of Mission Indians
- **Elise Gyore**, California State Assembly
- **Erika Cristo**, California Department of Health Care Services
- **Ivan Bhardwaj**, California Department of Health Care Services
- **Jackie Tompkins**, California Department of Aging
- **Jacob Ruiz**, Riverside University Health System- Behavioral Health
- **Jana Lord**, Sycamores
- **Kasey Suffredini**, The Trevor Project
- **Le Ondra Clark Harvey**, California Behavioral Health Association
- **Marika Collins**, Didi Hirsch Mental Health Service
- **Meenal Gounder**, California Department of Health Care Services
- **Raven Lopez**, County Behavioral Health Directors Association of

California

- **Rhyan Miller**, Riverside University Health System- Behavioral Health
- **Ruth Drake**, Pala Band of Mission Indians
- **Shari Sinwelski**, Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services
- **Tara Gamboa-Eastman**, Steinberg Institute
- **Trudy Raymundo**, California Department of Public Health

Workgroup Members (Absent)

- **Adrienne Shilton**, California Alliance of Child and Family Services
- **Amanda Nugent Divine**, Kings View
- **Ashley Mills**, California Department of Public Health
- **Brenda Grealish**, Commission for Behavioral Health
- **Carli Stelzer**, California Behavioral Health Association
- **Christine Bagley**, California Department of Developmental Services
- **Doug Subers**, California Professional Firefighters
- **Keris Jän Myrick**, Inseparable (Mental Health Advocacy and Programs)
- **Kristin Miller**, Riverside University Health System- Behavioral Health
- **Narges Zohoury Dillon**, Crisis Support Services of Alameda County
- **Phebe Bell**, California Mental Health Services Authority
- **Ruben Imperial**, Stanislaus County Behavioral Health
- **Saurav Jung Thapa**, The Trevor Project
- **Sean Johnson**, CalVet

Project Team (Virtual)

- **Anh Thu Bui**, CalHHS
- **Brett McMillen**, Advocates for Human Potential, Inc. (AHP)
- **Jamie Strausz-Clark**, Hypha Consulting

Meeting Summary

WELCOME

Jamie Strausz-Clark, Hypha Consulting, opened the meeting by reviewing workgroup protocols, instructions for public comment, meeting objectives and agenda, workgroup members, and PAG mutual agreements. The meeting objectives for the Sustainable Funding Workgroup Meeting #1 included:

1. Identify where the PAG's priority topics align with work completed in

earlier phases, and determine which areas fall within the Sustainable Funding Workgroup's role, scope, and expertise, so the group can target efforts where it can have the greatest impact.

2. Inform the 2026 Progress Report by offering insights on:
 - a. Ways performance data, including data on downstream cost savings, can be leveraged to support sustainable funding for the 988 system.
 - b. Approaches for presenting outcomes in ways that resonate with decision makers and funders.
3. Identify barriers to and opportunities for maximizing reimbursement and strengthening parity across Medi-Cal, commercial plans, and other payer sources.
4. Define next steps for the workgroup, including potential topics for the second Sustainable Funding Workgroup meeting.
5. Hear public comments.

PRESENTATION: Addressing PAG Priorities

Dr. Anh Thu Bui, CalHHS, provided a brief presentation that revisited the AB 988 Five-Year Implementation Plan with a special focus on funding and sustainability. She reviewed the potential implementation activities dedicated to the key recommendation of implementing strategies to support sustainable crisis systems. Dr. Bui also noted that CalHHS is seeking input and feedback from PAG members on how to ensure that the public-facing funding information is understandable. Current documentation and resources for the fund process include a 988 Surcharge Overview and a 988 Funding Overview, located in the [AB 988 Five-Year Implementation Plan](#); the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) [988 Calculation Surcharge Methodology](#); and the draft CalHHS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document. She requested that PAG members review these documents and share what is not clear or what additional information should be provided. Dr. Bui then reviewed the current 988 state budget and surcharge process with the group. The budgetary process involves complex, multilevel discussion across various state departments, advocates, community partners, the Legislature, the Department of Finance, and the Governor's Office.

Jamie concluded the presentation with an overview of key themes suggested by PAG members for the Sustainable Funding Workgroup to consider. She shared how these focus areas align with the workgroup's role, scope, and capacity.

Jamie then opened the conversation for comments and/or questions from workgroup members. A few workgroup members spoke about the importance of involving Crisis Centers in funding conversations and the difference between fund balance (where dollars simply roll over into the next year for operational costs) and reserve (a set-aside of funds for urgent and emergent needs).

DISCUSSION: Funding & Metrics

Jamie asked the group the following key questions:

1. What types of performance data best demonstrate the value of 988 to decision-makers, funders, and other stakeholders?
2. What are specific ways we could quantify and communicate downstream cost savings?

The following outlines the main points of this discussion.

Performance Data

Workgroup members discussed what types of performance data best demonstrate the need for 988 and identified the following key data points:

- Number of individuals served that were able to be safely stabilized by 988 Crisis Centers without escalation to mobile crisis teams.
- Number/volume of calls, chats, texts, and follow-up calls.
- Types of calls (e.g., substance use vs. suicidal ideation, mental health calls).
- Self-rated intent for suicide among 988 help seekers (i.e., not all callers are at risk of suicide, but among those who are, showing the decrease in their self-rated intent from the beginning of the call to the end).
- Outcomes and relationships that 988 Crisis Centers have with other parts of the crisis care continuum in terms of referrals for mobile crisis, access lines in other counties, and 911 diversion.
- Qualitative data, such as stories that are personal representations of

benefits individuals had when using the 988 system.

Quantifying Cost Savings

The group also discussed the possibility of quantifying data from all call centers (including county lines and 911 dispatch), not just 988, to increase understanding of downstream cost savings. Workgroup members thought it would be helpful to prioritize public-facing outreach and communication, such as a dashboard with quantitative and qualitative data. It was noted that the California 988 Crisis Center Consortium has tried determining the cost of services and forecasting future costs, but it can be challenging to predict long term. Workgroup members discussed exploring technology to make data collection processes easier and the possibility of looking at what other states are doing to track return on investment.

DISCUSSION: Strengthening Funding Pathways and Reimbursement for 988 Crisis Services

Next, Jamie asked the group the following key questions:

1. What are the current barriers to getting reimbursed for providing crisis services?
2. What tools or resources might help address these barriers? If your organization uses any of these tools, would you be willing to share them with us?

Workgroup members discussed current barriers to reimbursement for crisis services and resources needed. Two main barriers were identified:

- **Structural and process challenges.** Workgroup members cited issues such as lack of standardized billing pathways; problems with billing codes, claim forms, provider IDs, and claim routing; and missing information, incorrect submissions, and misdirected claims.
- **Lack of trust or understanding among partners.** The group talked about the lack of information, especially among county partners who don't often bill commercial insurance, and the history of claims denials or underpayments from health plans, causing a lack of trust, and that many providers stopped billing entirely.

Proposed solutions to these challenges included payer/health plan education outreach; evaluations of contracting gaps and inaccuracies; and training and technical assistance around concrete operational guidance like standardized billing pathways. There should also be a concerted effort to rebuild trust and collaboration among providers, public and commercial payers, and consumers, making sure to include underrepresented voices such as Tribes. The group talked about creative solutions to payment issues, such as reduction or removal of copays or statutory changes around deductibles.

MEETING CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The following were calls to action made during the discussion portion of the meeting:

- PAG members should review the 988 Surcharge Overview and a 988 Funding Overview, located in the AB 988 Five-Year Plan; the Cal OES 988 Calculation Surcharge Methodology; and the draft CalHHS FAQs and provide feedback.
- PAG members should continue to share their success stories with CalHHS via email (AB988Info@chhs.ca.gov) so they can be added to the Progress Report.
- By March 19, PAG members should please share the following:
 - Examples of communication tools for presenting 988 outcomes to decision makers and funders.
 - Tools and resources that help address barriers to reimbursement.

Jamie then reviewed the schedule for the upcoming workgroup meetings:

- March 19, 2026: Integration of 988 into the Crisis Continuum Workgroup #2.
- April 7, 2026: Sustainable Funding Workgroup #2.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

Meeting materials and the recording will be available on the [988-Crisis Policy Advisory Group website](#). Resources from the meeting are included as an appendix to this file.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comments were open for this meeting. Comments could be submitted at any time via email at AB988Info@chhs.ca.gov. None were submitted live or

via email.

Appendix

RESOURCES

- AB 988 Five-Year Implementation Plan (CalHHS): <https://www.chhs.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/AB-988-Five-Year-Implementation-Plan-Final-ADA-Compliant.pdf>
- 988 Rate Calculation Surcharge Methodology (CalOES): [988 Rate Calculation Surcharge Methodology - Calendar Year 2026 \(002\).pdf](https://www.caloes.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/PSC/Documents/CDTFA-Access-Line-Letter-CY-2026.pdf)
- California Department Fund Condition Statements FY 25-26: <https://ebudget.ca.gov/2025-26/pdf/Enacted/GovernorsBudget/0010/0690FCS.pdf>
- California Department of Tax and Fee Administration Access Line Letter (CalOES) <https://www.caloes.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/PSC/Documents/CDTFA-Access-Line-Letter-CY-2026.pdf>
- California's Budget Process (California Department of Finance) <https://dof.ca.gov/budget/californias-budget-process/>
- A Cost-Benefit Analysis of State Funding for the 988 Crisis Lifeline (University of Wisconsin-Madison) <https://lafollette.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1713/2025/09/UW-Pop-Health-988-Crisis-Line.pdf>