

California Behavioral Health Task Force Meeting



Quarter 2 (2026) Meeting Focus

California has made major investments in behavioral health through the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA), the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI), and Behavioral Health Community-Based Organized Networks of Equitable Care and Treatment (BH-CONNECT). This meeting focused on how California grows, supports, and retains the workforce needed to meet rising demand for care.

The core question guiding the discussion: California faces a growing behavioral health workforce shortage as more people seek support. How do we close the gap?

During the discussion, a shared understanding emerged: Equity isn't separate from clinical strategy. A workforce that reflects and is trusted by the communities it serves can improve engagement, access, and outcomes across mental health, substance use, and physical health care.

What Was Presented:

171,000

non-prescribing clinicians needed by 2033, **double** today's workforce

1,300+

enrolled in Peer Support Specialist training, with an **89% pass rate**

\$1.9B

invested in BH-CONNECT Workforce Initiative through **2029**

Click for the [Full Presentation](#) & [Recording](#) 

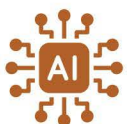
What Members Surfaced:



Create sustainable statewide pathways into non-clinical behavioral health careers that reduce barriers and expand workforce access beyond individual counties or organizations.



Expand Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and complex needs training across systems of care, from first responders to licensed clinicians, with ongoing implementation support.



Use (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) HIPAA-compliant artificial intelligence (AI) to reduce paperwork and burnout while protecting privacy, reducing bias, and preserving human-centered care.

Ways to Get Involved



BH-CONNECT workforce opportunities are launching statewide: New programs support recruitment, training, and retention for Medi-Cal behavioral health providers



Workforce shortages vary significantly across regions: Members emphasized using workforce data to identify local gaps and guide future investments