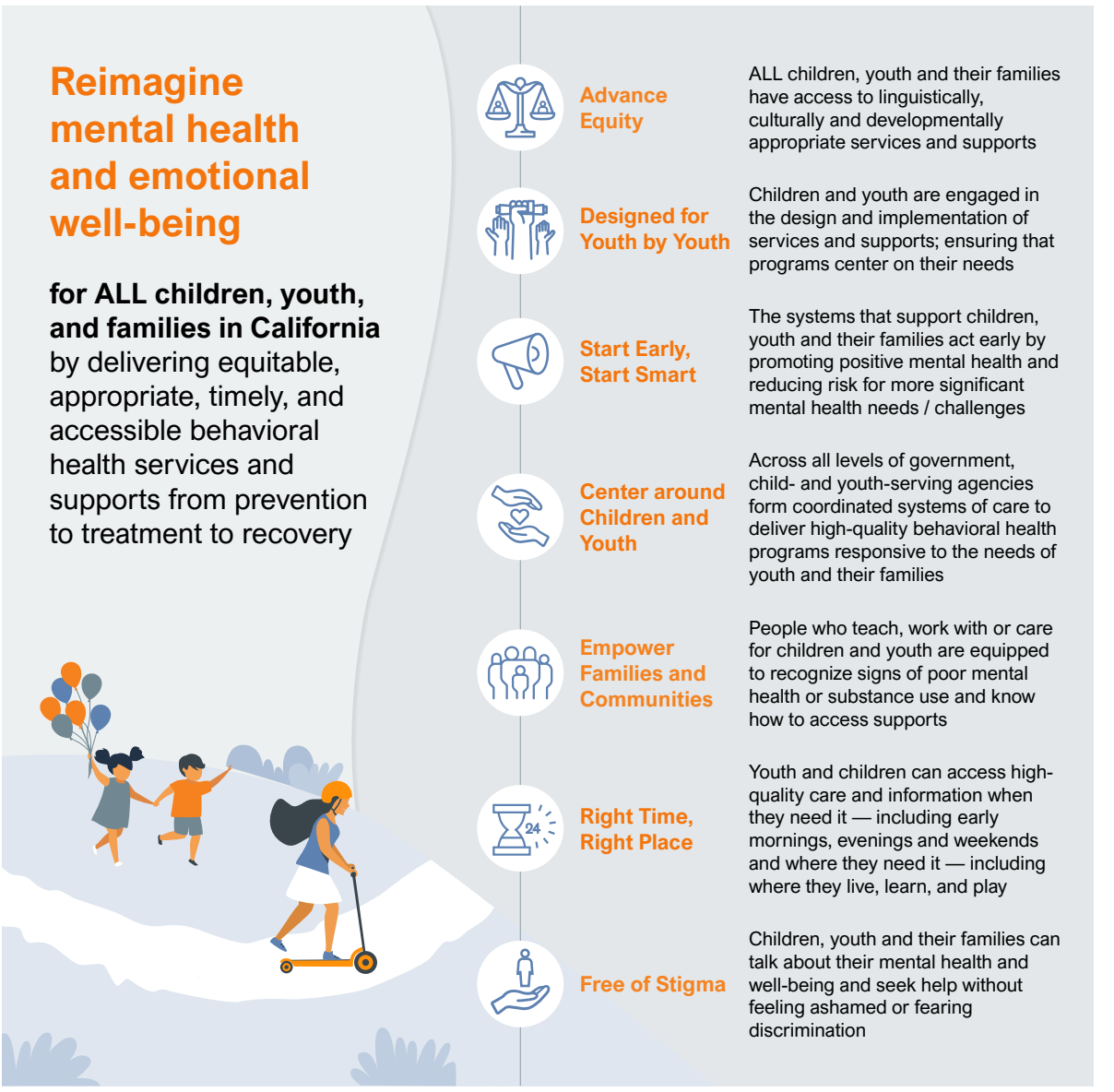


Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative

Overview

The goal of the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative is to reimagine the systems that support behavioral health and wellness for California’s children and youth into an innovative, up-stream focused, ecosystem. This ecosystem will focus on promoting well-being and preventing behavioral health challenges, and on routinely screening, supporting, and serving ALL children and youth for emerging and existing behavioral health (mental health and substance use) needs.

Figure 1: Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative goals



The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative will be designed and implemented in partnership with CalHHS departments, education stakeholders from early childhood, K-12 and higher education, other State agencies, subject matter experts, community partners and stakeholders on the ground and in the field, and children, youth, and their families.

Background

Focusing on prevention and early intervention can help reduce children and youth's risk of developing serious mental, emotional and developmental challenges. Research shows that half of all lifetime cases of diagnosable mental illnesses begin by age 14, three-fourths begin by age 24, and most substance use begins in adolescence,^{1,2} emphasizing the need to strengthen prevention and early identification and intervention services. In California, thirteen percent of children aged 3-17 years reported having at least one mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral health problem³ and eight percent of children have a serious emotional disturbance that limits participation in daily activity.⁴ Despite these high rates of needs, many children and youth with behavioral health needs do not receive care. A 2018 report shows that about two-thirds of adolescents with major depressive episodes in California do not get treatment.⁵ The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated children and youth's behavioral health issues, underscoring the need to reimagine the children and youth behavioral health system. We can and must do more to prevent the circumstances that lead to these challenges by focusing on strategies that strengthen protective factors and support the social and emotional well-being of ALL of California's children and youth.

California is seeking to enhance, expand and redesign the behavioral health system to meet these needs, including by integrating behavioral health into health, education, and other sectors that support children, youth, and families. This effort will include a stronger focus on prevention, improved access to programs and services, and better access to emergency and acute care services. All this will depend on our ability to build up the necessary workforce in communities and schools. There is also a need for a stronger focus on equity in addressing behavioral health challenges, including supporting and developing specific strategies for communities of color, low-income families, LGBTQ+ individuals, and communities with elevated rates of adverse childhood experiences.

California has made a commitment to take a statewide, comprehensive approach to this long-term challenge. The opportunity to build a true system of care for all children and youth will change the arc of the lives of the next generation of Californians, creating the potential to

¹ Kessler RC, Berglund P, Demler O, Jin R, Merikangas KR, Walters EE. Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication [published erratum appears in Arch Gen Psychiatry 2005;62:768]. Arch Gen Psychiatry 2005;62:593–602

² NIDA. 2021, August 3. Introduction. Retrieved from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/principles-adolescent-substance-use-disorder-treatment-research-based-guide/introduction> on 2021, November 19

³ Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative. 2019 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) data query. Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB). Retrieved [10/12/21] from [www.childhealthdata.org].

⁴ Holzer C and Nguyen H. Estimation of Need for Mental Health Services. 2014

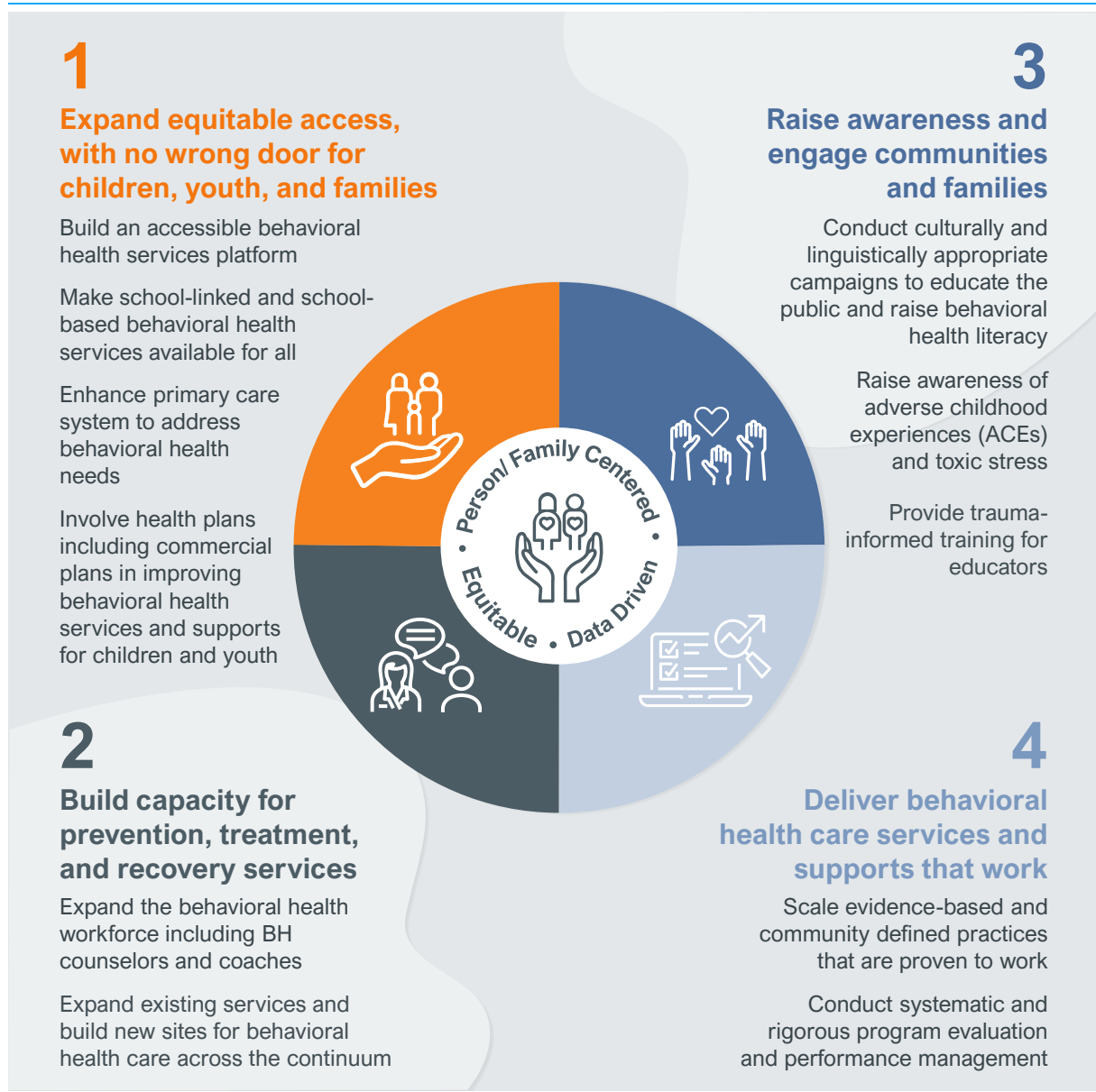
⁵ California Health Care Almanac, California Health Care Foundation, March 2018, <https://www.chcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/MentalHealthCA2018.pdf>

alter key drivers of poor health, homelessness, incarceration, and poverty. California has made a significant one-time investment of \$ 4.4 billion over five years to redesign the behavioral health system for children and youth. The process of redesign will bring together representative stakeholders from systems and sectors that support children, youth, and their families including health, education and other sectors that play a critical role in promoting positive mental health. The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative will serve as a catalyst for reimagining the systems that support behavioral health for children and youth and creating synergistic partnerships and integrated strategies across sectors and programs to ensure youth needs are centered and equity in access and outcomes is advanced. This is a tremendous opportunity to make a long-term impact on the health and well-being of California’s children and youth.

Launching the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative components

The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative will initially focus on eleven components across four main themes. Each component is associated with multiple actions, programs, and initiatives and will have specific measurable goals to ensure that the vision of an innovative children and youth behavioral health ecosystem is achieved. The focus areas and components of the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative will continue to evolve to address the needs of children and youth.

Figure 2: Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative initial focus areas and components



Timeline and milestones

Since the California State Budget passed in July 2021 which included the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative, CalHHS has launched an interdepartmental team to focus initially on activating and expanding stakeholder engagement, analyzing existing efforts, planning implementation, and making preparations to launch the initial solution design. A roadmap and milestones will be defined and updated as the team incorporates stakeholder inputs and completes the initial planning phase across all program components.

Figure 3: Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative initial milestones in July 2021-June 2022

