



CARE Act Quarterly Implementation Update | June 2023

On October 1, an initial cohort of seven counties will implement CARE, with Los Angeles following in December. With the support of CalHHS and other state partners, counties and courts are actively working to ensure they are ready to provide integrated, holistic care to CARE respondents. At the local level, counties and courts are hiring and training staff, identifying and creating new housing settings, especially with new Behavioral Health Bridge Housing funding, and ensuring partnerships are in place to coordinate care. State partners will continue to support the systems transformation necessary for successful CARE implementation with a focus on: data and evaluation, training and technical assistance, and communication tools to support local partner engagement. Key upcoming activities include:

- CARE Act Working Group meets August 9
- Cohort 1 Counties convene on July 14 and September 8
- The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) will select the Independent Evaluator for CARE, following a proposal process
- Additional training and technical assistance will be developed and provided counties, courts, legal representation, and other partners

This quarterly update summarizes progress made on CARE Act implementation for April–June 2023 and upcoming activities. At the end of this document is a high-level timeline of 2023 implementation activities.

Working Group

On May 17, CalHHS held the second CARE Act Working Group meeting. Members provided feedback on the Judicial Council's rules and forms, as well as input on what data and information will support showing what success looks like for CARE.

To further support implementation, the Working Group identified a need for ad hoc subgroups that can work deeply and efficiently on three initial areas of focus: Services & Supports, Training & Technical Assistance, and Data Collection, Reporting & Evaluation. To maximize the impact of these subgroups, the Working Group wants to ensure they encompass cross cutting perspectives from peers, family members, and others with lived experience; racial and social justice; and providers.

Members indicated an interest in hearing updates on County implementation status at future meetings. More information can be found on the CARE Act Working Group [website](#). These meetings will continue quarterly through 2026.

Support for Counties

On April 12, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) posted an [Information Notice](#) regarding the process for counties to request delayed implementation of CARE. The guidance states that an extension depends on demonstrating to DHCS that a county is experiencing a state or local emergency, and the delay is necessary as a result of the emergency.

On May 19, CalHHS hosted counties

implementing CARE in 2023 for their third day-long in-person working session on CARE implementation. (Cohort 1 Counties Glenn, Orange, Riverside, San Diego, Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and San Francisco will begin on October 1, and Los Angeles on December 1). DHCS' Training and Technical Assistance vendor (Health Management Associates – HMA) provided a data collection and reporting update, including a sample of the forthcoming CARE "data dictionary," which will provide data collection specifications. Counties had small group strategy discussions on various elements of CARE implementation.

On June 15, the Legislature passed a budget that includes investments in county behavioral health administrative costs and other resources to support the ongoing implementation of CARE.

On June 23, DHCS began awarding nearly \$907 million of the \$1.5 billion in funding for the [Behavioral Health Bridge Housing \(BHBH\) Program](#) to California county behavioral health agencies. The primary focus of the BHBH Program is to help people experiencing unsheltered homelessness who also have serious behavioral health conditions, including mental health and substance use disorders, that prevent them from accessing help and moving out of homelessness.

The BHBH Program prioritizes serving the needs of individuals that participate in CARE and will help address housing instability and homelessness by providing support through various "bridge" housing settings, including tiny homes, interim

housing, rental assistance models, and assisted living settings. Also, bridge housing settings include voluntary supportive services to help program participants obtain and maintain housing, manage symptoms of serious behavioral health conditions, and support recovery and wellness.

HMA hosted a variety of trainings, including:

- CARE Act 201: The Client’s Journey through the CARE Act
- CARE Act 202: The CARE Agreement & CARE Plan
- CARE Act Eligibility in Practice
- Practical Approaches to Housing for the CARE Act

These are available on the CARE Act Resource webpage which provides training, technical assistance, and resources to CARE Act stakeholders.

DHCS’ internal CARE Act Data Workgroup has been working with HMA to develop a data collection and reporting tool and specifications for a forthcoming CARE “data dictionary.”

Courts and Legal Services

On May 12, the Judicial Council (JC) approved the [revised CARE Act rules and forms](#) for adoption.

On June 15, the Legislature passed a budget with investments for court hearings, legal representation, court personnel or other implementation

costs. JC continues to meet with other government partners in the CARE Act to align assumptions about capacity and costs.

On June 22, the Judicial Council provided a Rules and Forms Overview training for Cohort 1 and Los Angeles Court Project Teams. This training was followed by a two-hour open forum for questions and discussion of implementation challenges and solutions. Additionally, the JC provided a 3-part training series on Conflict Resolution and De-escalation for Court Self-Help Center and Family Law Facilitator staff. JC also continues to provide training and technical assistance for court clerks, staff, Counsel, and self-help centers. JC will be collaborating with HMA to train legal counsel.

On June 30, the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission released an [application for Qualified Legal Services Projects \(QLSP\)](#) to apply to represent CARE respondents in counties implementing CARE in 2023. The Legal Services Trust Fund Commission is responsible for funding the role of qualified legal services projects (QLSPs) and support centers under the CARE Act. CARE Courts must appoint QLSPs to represent those who are the subject of a CARE Court petition (respondents). Where no QLSP has agreed to represent respondents, the court must appoint a public defender instead.

Community Updates and Other Implementation Activities

On June 7, DHCS released a [Request for Information \(RFI\)](#) for an independent

evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of the CARE Act. Responses are due July 5. The evaluation design will be developed in consultation with county behavioral health agencies, county CARE courts, racial justice experts, and other appropriate stakeholders, including providers and CARE Act participants. The final evaluation report is intended to assess the effectiveness of the CARE Act, as well as highlight racial, ethnic, and other demographic disparities, and include information regarding the impact of the CARE Act on disparity reduction efforts.

On June 12, the legislature introduced revisions to [Senate Bill 35](#) which include amendments to clarify the CARE Act.

The HMA trainings referenced above are intended for all counties, counsel, judges, county providers, and other stakeholders participating in the CARE Act implementation. Upcoming trainings also include:

- **Supported Decision-Making & the CARE Act:** This training will provide an introduction to supported decision-making (SDM), with discussion of principles of SDM, concepts of a decision-making network, and how SDM works within the CARE proceedings.
- **The Supporter Role and Supported Decision-Making:** This training will be oriented toward volunteer supporters and provide an introduction to key concepts of supported decision-making (SDM), including person-centered planning and communication skills as well as the role of the volunteer supporter within the CARE Act process.

2023 Milestones and Activities – CARE Act Implementation

Q1 2023

- CalHHS hosted first CARE Act Working Group convening
- DHCS released RFA for county Behavioral Health Bridge Housing (BHBH funding)
- DHCS CARE Act TA vendor contract executed
- JC accepted public comment on Rules and Forms through January
- Cohort 1 Counties convened March 10

Q3 2023

- CARE Act Working Group meets August 9
- Cohort 1 Counties convene on July 14 and September 8
- DHCS evaluation vendor selected
- Additional DHCS TA materials developed; TA activities continue

Q2 2023

- DHCS released RFI for evaluation
- DHCS launched CARE Act TA website
- Initial DHCS TA materials developed and distributed and TA activities began
- DHCS awarded county BHBH funding
- CARE Act Working Group met May 17
- Cohort 1 Counties convened on May 19
- JC adopted CARE Act Rules and Forms

Q4 2023

- Cohort 1 begins October 1
- Cohort 1 Counties convene November 3
- CARE Act Working Group meets November 8
- Data collection/reporting commences for annual reports and evaluation
- DHCS will award additional BHBH funding
- Los Angeles County begins December 1
- DHCS will release RFA for additional BHBH funding