



# Mental Health Wellness Act Peer Respite Funding Outline

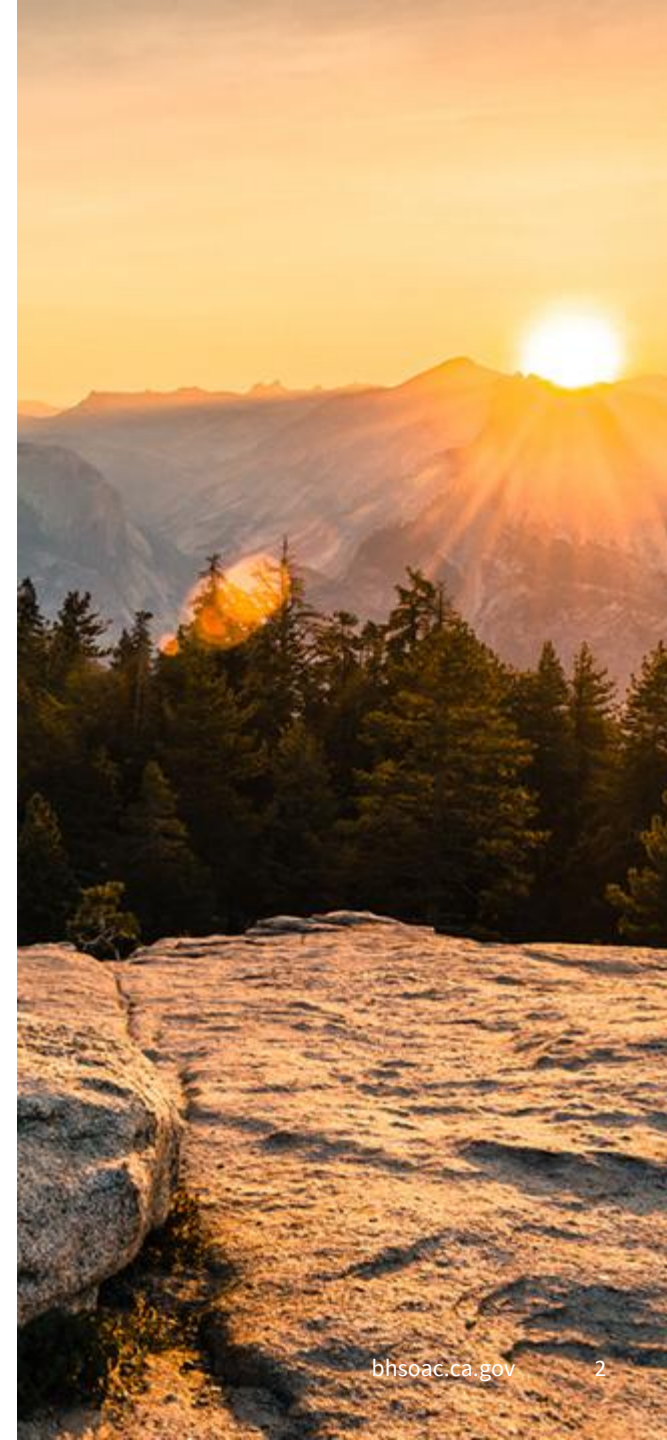
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# Goals

To share the outline for appropriating  
\$20 million in Mental Health Wellness Act (MHWA)  
funds for peer respite



# MHWA Funds

California's Mental Health Wellness Act (MHWA) grant program provides \$20 million each year to improve community response to people facing behavioral health crises.

Grants enable crisis responders to connect those in crisis with wellness, resiliency, and recovery-oriented programs that offer the least restrictive settings appropriate for their needs.

# MHWA Funding Priorities

## SIX FOCUS AREAS

1. EmPath
2. PEARLS and Age Wise
3. Maternal Behavioral Health and Children Ages 0-5
4. Substance Use Disorder Pilot Program
5. Full Service Partnership Technical Assistance
6. Peer Respite



# **The Peer Respite Project**

# Peer Respite Definition

*A peer respite is a temporary residence offering peer support services provided 24/7 in a homelike setting, staffed and operated entirely by peers.*

- Guided by the intentional peer support model, not the medical or clinical model
- Stays are generally 7 to 14 days, with extensions possible up to 30 days
- Peer support specialists offer linkage to services, skill development, and advice and support

# Project Process & Community Engagement

- Interviews with over 40 experts, peer respite operators, county behavioral health staff, and peers
- 7 site visits to peer respites in California
- Literature review and landscape analysis
- Communication with 58 out of 59 California behavioral health jurisdictions
- Communication with 11 Peer-Run Organizations (PROs) in California





# Peer Respite Site Visits

- ✓ SHARE! in Los Angeles
- ✓ Insight Peer Respite in Grass Valley
- ✓ Sally's Place in Hayward
- ✓ Safe Harbor in San Leandro
- ✓ Monarch House in Roseville
- ✓ 2<sup>nd</sup> Story in Aptos
- ✓ Garden Gate in Modesto





# Peer Respite Integration within the Behavioral Health Continuum



Serves those struggling with severe mental illness, substance use, and risk of homelessness



Delivers cost-cutting outcomes of reduced hospitalization and increased linkage to lower levels of care



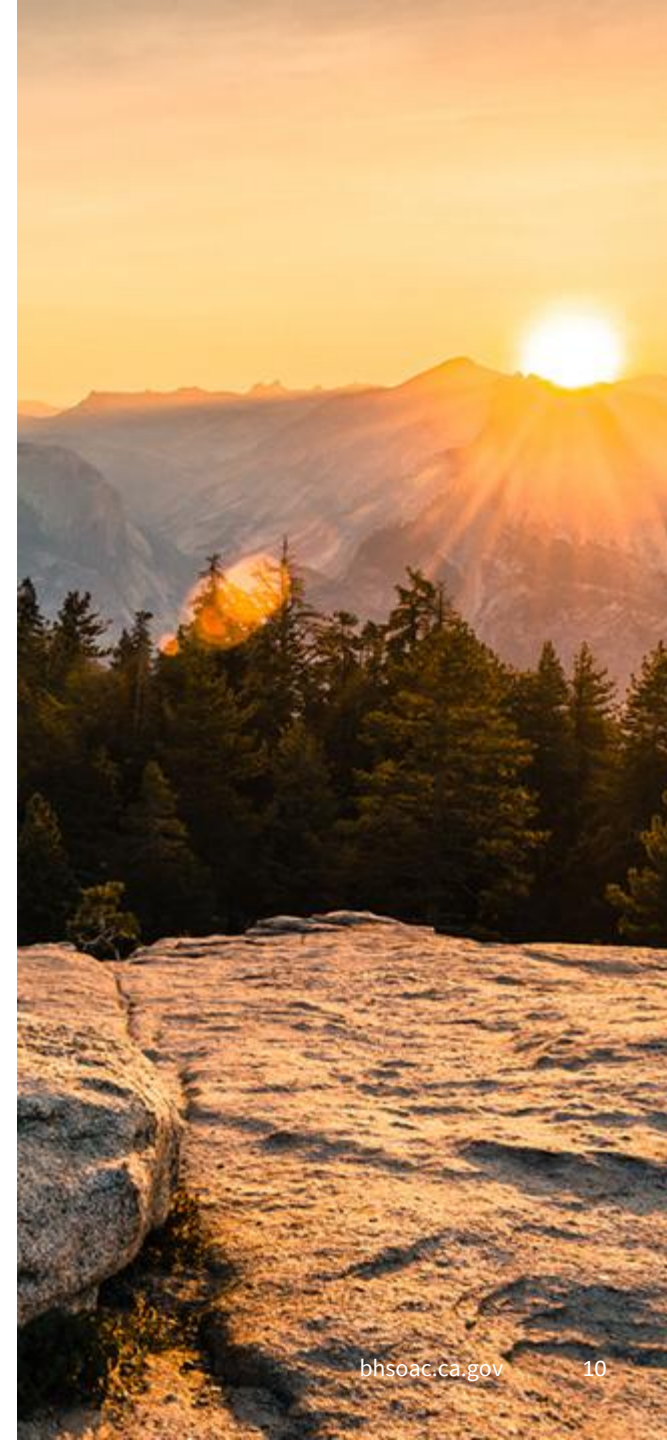
Acts as an engagement tool for Full-Service Partnerships and other county-offered care



Employs peers via a guest-to-staff pipeline

# Barriers to Establishing Peer Respite

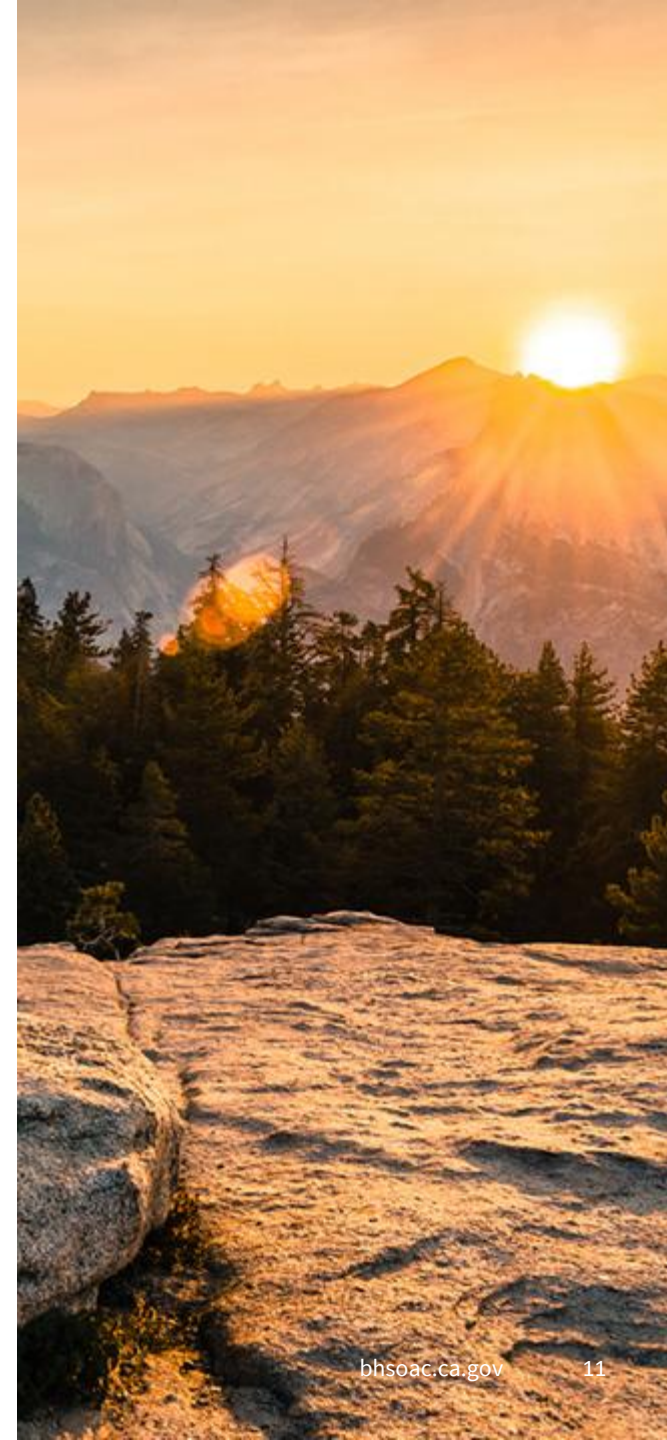
- Lack of sustainable funding to establish and maintain a peer respite.
- Some PROs do not yet have the capacity to bill Medi-Cal for services.
- Absence of partnerships between county behavioral health and local PROs.
- County and PROs lack the knowledge and guidance to work in partnership on operating a peer respite.



# Best Practices for Peer Respite Success

Peer respites succeed when:

1. The environment is homelike and welcoming.
2. They are led and staffed entirely by peers.
3. They have strong ties with county behavioral health and other community-based organizations offering services.
4. They are governed by strong policies and procedures.
5. There is a system in place for collecting data and monitoring outcomes.
6. They are sustained by braided, long-term funding.





# MHWA Peer Respite Funding Outline

# Peer Respite Funding – Two Phases

## **Phase 1: Investment \$10M – Awarded by June 30, 2026**

- Pilot project and learning collaborative are established

## **Phase 2: Investment \$10M – Awarded by June 30, 2028**

- Pilot project and learning collaborative continue
- Tailored funding offered to new and existing peer respites to meet their unique needs

# Peer Respite Funding – Phase 1

- **Pilot project** with interested counties and a PRO in their community
- **Technical assistance** on partnership development, business planning, securing sustainable funding, and best practices in peer respite
- A **learning collaborative** on establishing and sustaining an integrated peer respite
- **Research and evaluation**
- **Timing:** Projected to be released in spring 2026
- **Funding:** MHWA FY 2025-26 funds
  - \$10 million needs to be encumbered by June 30, 2027 (expiring June 30, 2029)

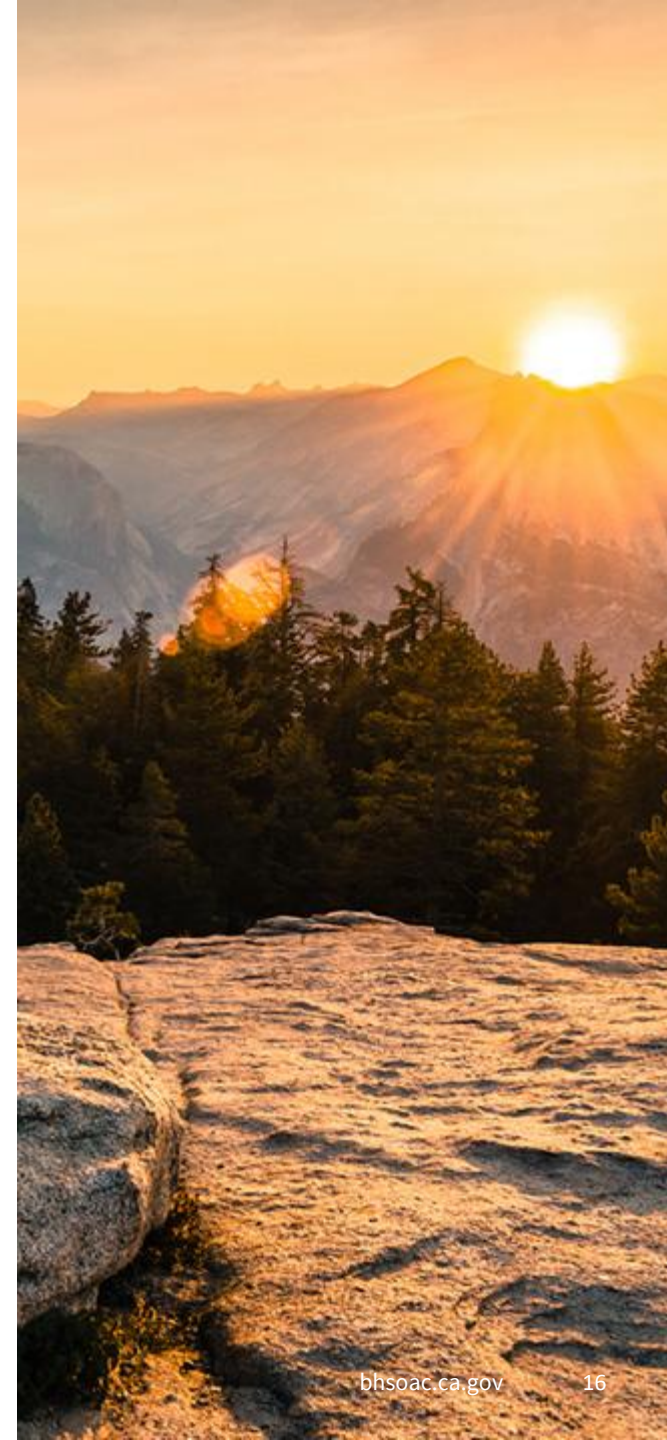


# Peer Respite Funding – Phase 2

- **Tailored funding** offered to new and existing peer respites to meet their unique needs
- **Learning collaborative** continues
- **Research and evaluation**
- **Timing:** Projected to be released in spring 2028
- **Funding:** MHWA FY 2026-27 funds
  - \$10 million needs to be encumbered by June 30, 2028 (expiring June 30, 2030)

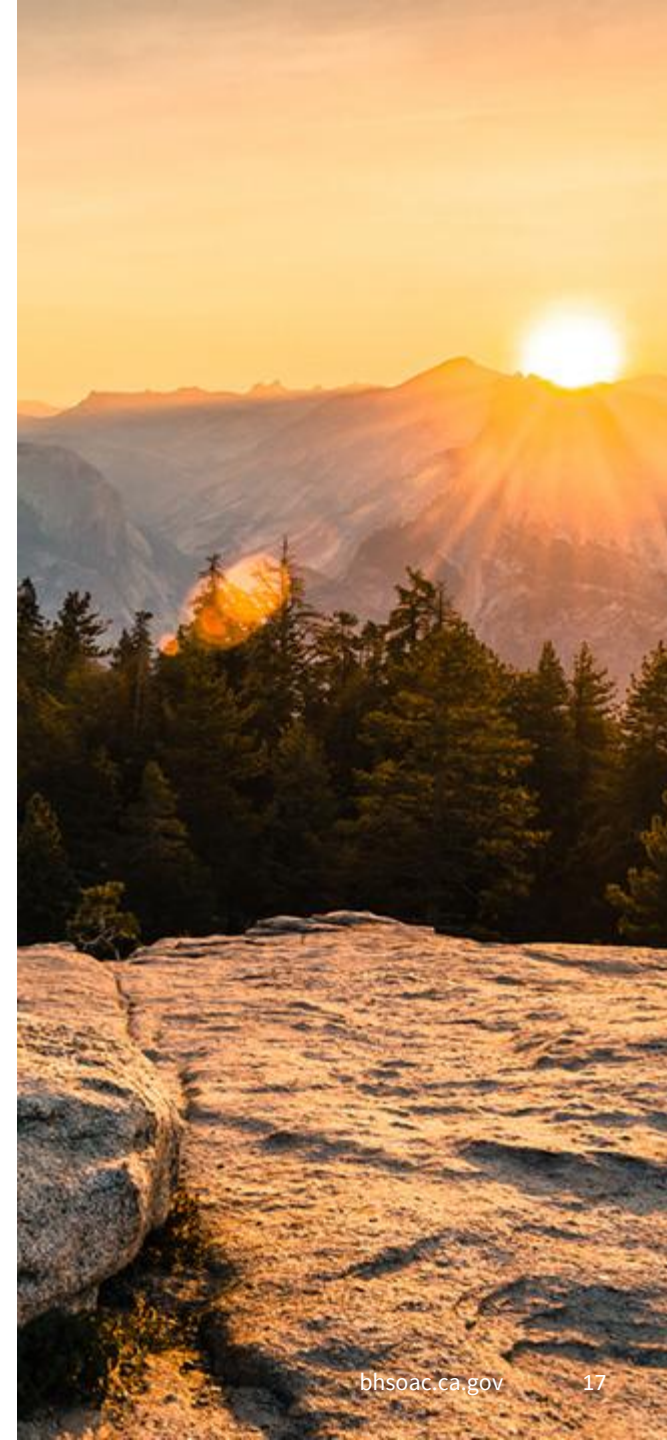
# Discussion Questions

- What questions and feedback do Committee members and the public have on the proposed plan for peer respite MHWA funds?



# Next Steps

- Adjust the outlines based on feedback from today.
- Present outlines for RFPs at the January 2026 Commission meeting.





**Vote: The Client, Family, and Community Inclusion, Lived Experience, and Diversity Advisory Committee recommends that the full Commission approve the Mental Health Wellness Act Peer Respite project outline.**