

Executive Director's Report

Reporting Period: February through March 2026

The work highlighted in this report has been undertaken by the Commission for Behavioral Health (CBH), led by the Executive Director and made possible through the dedicated support and generous expertise of CBH Commissioners, CBH staff, CBH grantees/contractors, and public stakeholders. This reporting period covers the period from February through March 2026. During this time frame, the Commission continued to focus on its Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) mandates, strengthening internal team infrastructure and operations, and promoting cross-agency collaboration.

Accomplishments

Highlights of CBH accomplishments during the reporting period are as follows:

Commissioner Strategic Priorities & Committee Implementation

- Initiated a CBH Strategic Plan update to align with new BHSA mandates, engaging an external contractor, Leading Resources, Inc., and identifying key priority areas for Commissioner consideration. The time-limited Strategic Plan Advisory Committee held its first meeting in February. The project is anticipated to be completed in August 2026.
- Initiated a reappropriation of \$4 million for allcove® Youth Drop-in Centers, which is reflected in the Governor's Fiscal Year 2026-27 proposed budget.
- Held five CBH committee meetings in February 2026.

Commission Projects

- Developed a Request for Application (RFA) for the Innovation Partnership Fund following Commission approval of the RFA outline in January 2026, which will be released in spring 2026.
- Published a BHSA Community Partner Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit with Program 11 to help community partners engage their county's BHSA community planning processes. This includes outreach on Commission digital channels, including social media and email, as well as outreach to legislative field offices, BHSA priority population organizations, State agencies, and others. The Commission will publish translations of the report in Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Tagalog, Arabic, Korean, Cambodian (Khmer), Vietnamese, and Dari/Farsi in the near future.

- Initiated a competitive procurement process for the CBH Transition Age Youth Advocacy grant (RFP-TAY-005).

Improving CBH Staff Team Operational Excellence

- Continued working on an internal operational excellence plan to strengthen CBH's infrastructure and support exceptional staff performance, establishing SMART goals and developing a RACI matrix to establish clear roles for successful implementation.
- Continued to meet monthly with the CBH Employee Wellness in the Workplace Workgroup (WWW). The WWW is drafting an action plan based on the recent CBH Staff Engagement and Wellbeing survey. In the meantime, CBH leadership has begun addressing initial WWW recommendations, including scheduling dedicated time for the executive team to be available to all CBH team members following all-staff meetings and establishing a team member suggestions box, which will be available online and in a physical location within the office.
- Ensured that all annual performance evaluations were completed for CBH team members, including leadership.
- Held monthly CBH All Team Meetings to celebrate accomplishments, disseminate information, and highlight current CBH work efforts. In February 2026, CBH's legal team provided a training for all staff on CBH's Conflict of Interest (COI) Waiver of Funds form, which will be presented to Commissioners at the May 2026 Full Commission meeting.
- Continued recruitment activities to fill all CBH vacancies. The permanent position vacancy rate remains similar to the January 2026 ED report (8.4% as of March 2, 2026).
- Continued leadership training with Leading Resources, Inc., for the executive director and full CBH management team.
- Initiated the CBH internal Quality Assurance Process Improvement project to strengthen quality and consistency across grants and contracts, integrating best-practice standards to improve clarity, accountability, and performance.
- Developed and disseminated an employee expectations agreement, which was signed by all team members.
- Ensured all team member annual telework agreements were completed.
- Strengthened the Commission's data loss prevention approach with the purchase of a secure enterprise browser, Island, and continued to receive Enterprise Architecture consulting and guidance through the California State Department of Technology.

CBH Budget Activities and Financial Health

- The Commission is on track with spending within current allocations and is projected to expend all allocated funds within the fiscal year.
- Fiscal Year 2026-27 budget negotiations are being actively monitored on an ongoing basis.

Commissioner, System Partner, and Stakeholder Collaboration and Engagement

- Met regularly (at least monthly) with the CBH Chair and Co-Chair and hold quarterly meetings with all Commissioners to communicate CBH strategic priorities and identify opportunities for continuous improvement.
- Maintained regular, collaborative engagement with key behavioral health system partners, including the California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS), Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH).
- Began collaborative meetings with the California Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Services Division.
- Maintained regular engagement with a broad base of system partners, including the California Behavioral Health Planning Council (CBHPC), California Behavioral Health Directors Association (CBHDA), California Association of Addiction Recovery Professionals (CAADPE), Racial and Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition (REMHDCO), California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards and Commissions (CalBHB/C), California National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs (CAPIAA), the California Commission on Aging (CCOA), the California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), the California Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC), and the California Labor and Workforce Development Board (CLWDB). Efforts to expand this list continue to engage with additional system partners and stakeholders to foster collaboration and gather diverse perspectives.
- Participated as a member on the DHCS Behavioral Health Transformation (BHT) Implementation Stakeholder Workgroup and the DHCS BHT Quality and Equity Advisory Committee.
- Participated as a member on the CalHHS Behavioral Health Task Force, the CalHHS Care Act Working Group, and CalHHS 988- Crisis Policy Advisory Group (including the CalHHS 988 Crisis PAG Workgroup on 988 Integration).

- Presented at conferences and convenings to share the Commission's initiatives and expertise on relevant behavioral health efforts, including:
 - California Alliance for Children and Youth Advocacy in Action Conference
 - California Behavioral Health Association Spring Policy Forum
 - California Children's Hospital Association's Behavioral Health Workgroup
 - Healthspieren's Center for Behavioral Health: Invest for Progress
 - One Mind Accelerator: MH Startups x State & Local Gov Panel
 - CalAsian Foundation Roundtable
- Attended conferences and convenings to stay informed on key multi-sector developments in behavioral health and to continuously foster collaborative networks, including:
 - Steinberg Institute's Vision 2030 Solution Symposium
 - Housing California Annual Conference
- Met with HCAI to provide feedback on their Workforce Education and Training (WET) Plan and participated in the WET Plan Review Panel Convening.
- Joined DSH for a LA Clinical Bright Spots Tour, which included an overview of Hollywood 2.0; tours of the Mark Twain Interim Housing Site, Fountain House Hollywood, and Office of Diversion and Reentry's residential site; as well as met with Mental Health Assistants at the LA County Jail meeting to learn about the Mental Health Assistant Training Program.

Upcoming Priorities (Next 60 Days)

Strategic focus for the next 60 days will concentrate on the following:

- Lead CBH's 2026 Strategic Plan Update with the Strategic Plan Advisory Committee.
- Track Fiscal Year 2026-27 State budget conversations and prepare for / participate in budget hearings in the Legislature.
- Continue CBH's internal operational excellence work to strengthen the Commission team infrastructure.

Risks, Challenges, & Mitigation Strategies

California's Budget Shortfall

- Continued budget uncertainty, exacerbated by a projected statewide deficit of approximately \$20 billion, poses a significant risk to the CBH operational budget and programs. This challenge impacts the broader public behavioral health system, of which CBH is a component.

- Mitigation strategies include:
 - Proactively engaging with the Legislature and Administration to advocate for continued support of CBH's important behavioral health projects.
 - Maintaining fiscal conservatism across operations and implementing cost-control measures, wherever possible, to preserve essential functions while anticipating potential funding changes.

CBH's Executive Team Vacancies

- Two key executive leadership positions remain vacant: 1) the Chief Deputy of Administration & Operations and 2) the Deputy Director for Research, Evaluation & Programs. Recruitment for these critical roles has been challenging.
- Mitigation strategies include actively exploring options for expanding recruitment outreach to a variety of professional networks to attract qualified candidates.

*Thank you for your continued leadership, partnership, and engagement.
I appreciate the guidance and support of the Commission as we work collectively to strengthen
California's behavioral health system and advance equitable, person-centered care for all
communities.*