



TO: Marya Alvarez, Chair, Commission for Behavioral Health
Brenda Grealish, Executive Director, CBH

FROM: Secretary Johnson, California Health and Human Services (CalHHS)

DATE: October 13, 2025

SUBJECT: Response to CBH re Community Engagement

Meaningful community engagement is a cornerstone of effective program and policy implementation, and we appreciate you bringing these concerns to our attention, especially as they relate to marginalized communities. CalHHS welcomes opportunities to work collaboratively to ensure individuals across the lifespan can share their lived experience to improve our work and the outcomes we hope to achieve. This document provides an overview of existing community engagement activities at CalHHS and its departments as well as upcoming Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) engagement activities.

Existing Community Engagement Activities: CalHHS is working to leverage existing bodies to improve both access to timely subject matter expertise as well as to hear directly from individuals who participate in services and have unique perspective on how improvements can be made. For example, the [CalHHS Behavioral Health Task Force](#) (BHTF) hosts quarterly meetings and monthly “lunch and learns” on topics that support the planning and implementation of Proposition 1 and behavioral health transformation. The BHTF recently focused on best practices and policies to address the housing needs of priority populations identified in the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) and later this fall the group will focus on substance use disorder services from prevention to long-term recovery.

Other bodies leveraging direct input from individuals with lived experience include:

- [CalHHS CARE Act Working Group](#)
- [CalHHS 988-Crisis Policy Advisory Group](#)
- [Department of Health Care Services \(DHCS\) Medi-Cal Member Advisory Committee](#)
- [California Department of Aging Equity Advisory Committee on Aging and Disability](#)
- [California Child Welfare Council](#)
- [Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative Children Youth and Family Network](#)



- [Office of Youth and Community Restoration Youth Advisory Board](#)
- CalHHS, in partnership with DHCS leadership, has hosted an informal monthly roundtable to hear directly from peer leaders on critical issues of their choosing including improved implementation and expansion of the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist benefit.

Upcoming BHSA Community Engagement Activities: There are opportunities and resources to support the BHSA community planning process at the local level as well as identify planning efforts at the state level that the community can engage in, included below.

DHCS:

- DHCS is hosting a [public informational webinar](#) on October 16, from 2-3 pm focused on engaging in the BHSA Community Planning Process. During the session, participants will learn how to become involved in the Community Planning Process, how DHCS evaluates meaningful stakeholder engagement in the Integrated Plan, and about resources available to help foster your engagement efforts.
- DHCS has created [many helpful resources](#) that we plan to share to the public through our BHTF list serve and make sure people aware of the upcoming October 16th webinar.
- DHCS is convening the [BHT Quality and Equity Advisory Committee](#) for its eighth meeting of the year on October 21st.
- DHCS contracted with CalMHSA to create [best practices planning tools for counties](#).
- DHCS has produced multiple new informational products to support the community planning process. Here are a few useful examples:
 - An infographic that provides an overview of the Community Planning Process and local stakeholder engagement, [linked here](#).
 - An infographic that provides an overview of behavioral health settings, services and funding sources, [linked here](#).
 - An infographic that includes the county BHT reporting timelines, [linked here](#).

CDPH:

- CDPH released its [BHSA Population-Based Prevention Program Guide-Phase I](#) for public comment in July.
- Later this month, CDPH plans to release its BHSA Population-Based Prevention Program Guide- Phase II for public comment.

HCAI:



- HCAI convened 21 community engagement sessions as part of its Workforce Education and Training (WET) community engagement process with over 287 participants to identify the most effective solutions for addressing California's behavioral health workforce shortage. HCAI is using these community engagements to identify specific recommended workforce program proposals.
 - HCAI will provide an overview of the emerging findings of the WET Plan stakeholder sessions at the [California Behavioral Health Planning Council; Workforce and Employment Committee](#) on October 15th from 1:40pm.
- HCAI has launched a collaborative project exploring targeted investments in pathway programs to diversify and expand California's behavioral health workforce. The Phase 1 report will be delivered on October 10th.

In addition, CalHHS and its departments are forging collaborative relationships with Commission for Behavioral Health's staff to support BHSA planning and implementation. At this point, several touchpoints through regularly scheduled meetings are underway. We are fully committed to sharing what we hear and learn in various forums including from within our departments and across agencies to guide, improve and enhance implementation efforts.