

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES
ABBREVIATED NOTICE OF GENERAL PUBLIC INTEREST
RELEASE DATE: June 14, 2024

PROPOSED BH-CONNECT ADDENDUM APPLICATION

This abbreviated public notice provides information of public interest regarding the California Department of Health Care Services' (DHCS') intent to submit to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) an addendum to the pending [Section 1115 Behavioral Health Community-Based Organized Networks of Equitable Care and Treatment \(BH-CONNECT\) demonstration](#) that aims to further strengthen the continuum of care for Medi-Cal members with significant behavioral health conditions.

DHCS is soliciting public input on the Section 1115 demonstration addendum application. A full draft of the proposed BH-CONNECT Addendum application and initial notice of public interest were posted on June 14, 2024 and are available on the [DHCS website](#).

In October 2023, California submitted the pending BH-CONNECT demonstration application, which seeks to establish a robust continuum of evidence-based community services for people with significant mental health conditions and/or substance use disorders, with key supports for fidelity monitoring and implementation of treatment interventions. Through ongoing work with stakeholders and individuals with lived experience in late 2023 and through 2024, California identified additional opportunities to expand the continuum of care for Medi-Cal members with significant behavioral health needs who are experiencing long stays in an institutional setting, who are or who are at risk of experiencing homelessness, or need recovery-oriented residential care. These individuals have historically faced expansive challenges when leaving institutional settings or while experiencing homelessness, and are the members who stand most to gain in terms of recovery and community-stabilization by accessing services provided through BH-CONNECT, including those envisioned in this addendum.

California is now seeking to add an addendum to the BH-CONNECT application to further expand the care continuum for Medi-Cal members with significant behavioral health conditions. The addendum will offer two new options for county behavioral health plans to cover the following:

1. **Community Transition In-Reach Services.** County mental health plans will have the option to cover community-based in-reach services to support individuals in reintegrating into the community. The services will include a community-based, multi-disciplinary care transition team that provides intensive pre- and post-discharge care planning and transitional care management services, as well as a targeted set of services offered by community-based providers to facilitate the transition to community living. Medi-Cal members who reside in an opt-in county, with significant behavioral health conditions, and who

are experiencing or at risk of experiencing extended lengths of stay (120 days or more) in inpatient, residential, or subacute settings (including IMDs) will qualify for Community Transition In-Reach Services for up to 180 days prior to discharge and for a transitional period after discharge.

2. **Room and Board in Qualified Residential Settings.** DHCS is seeking authority to provide Room and Board in Qualified Residential Settings for up to six months for individuals with significant behavioral health conditions and specified risk factors (e.g., experiencing or at risk of homelessness, transitioning out of institutional settings, or transitioning from carceral settings). Qualified Residential Settings will be limited in size to 16 beds or less and must be unlocked and voluntary. The Qualified Residential Settings will provide Medi-Cal covered, voluntary, recovery-oriented services. Qualified Residential Settings must meet statewide standards established by DHCS in consultation with stakeholders. Peer respite settings can be considered Qualified Residential Settings if they meet statewide standards established by DHCS and have services that align with Living Room Model standards or another minimum standard consistent with national best practices and research as determined by DHCS.

In conjunction with the BH-CONNECT addendum, DHCS is announcing its intent to clarify coverage for High Fidelity Wraparound (HFW) as a Medi-Cal service. HFW is an evidence-based treatment modality for children and adolescents with the most complex and significant mental health conditions. When clinically appropriate, it can be used as an alternative to residential treatment. HFW already is provided to some of the children and youth who meet the clinical criteria for the service, but providers typically must bill for discrete elements of the service; there is no consistent way to bill the service across the state. While HFW does not require Medicaid 1115 demonstration authority to implement, DHCS views it as a critical element of BH-CONNECT.

PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT PROCESS

The 30-day public comment period for the BH-CONNECT Addendum application is from June 14, 2024, through July 14, 2024. All comments must be received no later than 11:59 PM (Pacific Time) on July 14, 2024.

All information regarding the BH-CONNECT Addendum can be found on the DHCS website at: <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/CalAIM/Pages/BH-CONNECT.aspx>. DHCS will update this website throughout the public comment and application process. The BH-CONNECT Addendum will also be circulated via DHCS' relevant electronic mailing lists, including the [DHCS Stakeholder Email List](#), Behavioral Health Stakeholder Updates List, Legislative and Government Affairs List, and Tribal/Indian Health Program List.

DHCS will host the following public hearings to solicit stakeholder comments. The public hearings will take place in-person and have online video streaming and telephonic conference capabilities to ensure accessibility.

- Tuesday, June 25, 2024 – First Public Hearing
 - 3:30 – 4:30 PM PT
 - Department of Health Care Services
 - 1700 K Street, Room 1014, Sacramento, CA 95814
 - Register for Zoom conference link: https://manatt.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_WmtEKY7YQ9WI9Y2KOEt3bA
 - Please register in advance if you plan to attend in-person or if you plan to attend by Zoom to receive your unique login details and a link to add the hearing to your calendar
 - Call-in information: 833 548 0276 (Toll Free)
 - Webinar ID: 915 1321 2168
 - Passcode: 062524
 - Callers do not need an email address to use the phone option and do not need to register in advance
- Tuesday, July 2, 2024 – Second Public Hearing
 - 3:30 – 4:30 PM PT
 - Department of Health Care Services
 - 1515 K Street, Room 204, Sacramento, CA 95814
 - Register for Zoom conference link: https://manatt.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_MbBcSeVHQCC3GBrc7DPyXw
 - Please register in advance if you plan to attend in-person or if you plan to attend by Zoom to receive your unique login details and a link to add the hearing to your calendar
 - Call-in information 833 928 4608 (Toll Free)
 - Webinar ID: 924 7133 3204
 - Passcode: 070224
 - Callers do not need an email address to use the phone option and do not need to register in advance

If you would like to view the BH-CONNECT Addendum or notices in person, you may visit your local county welfare department (addresses and contact information available at: <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medical/Pages/CountyOffices.aspx>). You may also request a copy of the proposed BH-CONNECT Addendum, notices, and/or a copy of submitted public comments, once available, related to the BH-CONNECT Addendum by requesting it in writing to the mailing or email addresses listed below.

Written comments may be sent to the following address; please indicate “BH-CONNECT Addendum” in the written message:

Department of Health Care Services
Director’s Office

Attn: Tyler Sadwith
P.O. Box 997413, MS 0000
Sacramento, California 95899-7413

Comments may also be emailed to 1115waiver@dhcs.ca.gov. Please indicate “BH-CONNECT Addendum” in the subject line of the email message.

To be assured consideration prior to submission of the BH-CONNECT Addendum application to CMS, comments must be received no later than 11:59 PM (Pacific Time) on July 14, 2024. Please note that comments will continue to be accepted after July 14, 2024, but DHCS may not be able to consider those comments prior to the initial submission of the BH-CONNECT Addendum application to CMS.

After DHCS reviews comments submitted during this State public comment period, the BH-CONNECT Addendum application will be submitted to CMS. Interested parties will also have the opportunity to officially comment on the BH-CONNECT Addendum application during the federal public comment period; the submitted application will be available for comment on the CMS website at:

<https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/section-1115-demo/demonstration-and-waiver-list/index.html>.