



Behavioral Health Bridge Housing Program

Round 3: County Behavioral Health Agencies — Strategic Enhancements Request for Application (RFA) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Definitions

What is the definition of “homeless”?

For purposes of the BHBH Program, the definition of “homeless” is based on the definition in the Enhanced Care Management program (ECM Policy Guide, September 2023, pages 11-12), and is defined in Attachment B, page 10, of the RFA.

What is the definition of a serious behavioral health condition?

The BHBH Program eligibility criteria are adapted from the Specialty Mental Health Services (SMHS) access criteria ([BHIN 21-073](#)) and the [Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System/Drug Medi-Cal access criteria \(BHIN 21-071; BHIN 24-001\)](#), including all Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Program participants. See Attachment B, page 11, for the definition of serious behavioral health condition.

Timelines

What is the timeline for the County Behavioral Health Agencies RFA Round 3?

The timeline for county BHAs to apply is found on RFA page 6.

How will grant announcements be made?

Application review will begin after April 10, 2024, and DHCS expects to announce County BHA conditional awards in July 2024. Applicants will be notified by email of either a conditional award or any resubmission requirements, or that funding has been denied. AHP will schedule meetings with conditional awardees to discuss the contracting process, including development of the Statement of Work (SOW) and payment schedule. The contracting process may entail either a modification to an existing BHBH Program contract or a new contract with AHP. All

applicants must sign the contract or contract modification for final execution/approval within 60 days of receipt. The final agreement must be signed, returned, and fully executed with AHP before funding will be made available.

See Section IV (Program Description, pages 4-8) of the RFA for more information about the application process and timeline.

Program Requirements

Who is eligible to apply for the County RFA?

Eligibility information can be found on RFA pages 3-4.

What is the priority population for the BHBH Program?

Please see RFA pages 4-5 for information about priority populations and Attachment B for definitions of “serious behavioral health condition” and “homeless.” Applicants must also demonstrate how they will use BHBH funds to reach historically underserved communities.

In addition, with the passage of [SB 1338](#) (Umberg, Chapter 319, Statutes of 2022), which established the CARE Program, Section 5982(b) of the Welfare and Institutions Code stipulates that CARE Program participants be prioritized for any appropriate bridge housing funded by the BHBH Program.

County BHAs should provide BHBH Program bridge housing and services throughout the county, including in rural areas, to enable people to remain in their communities.

Applicants that propose to serve any of the following populations may receive specific consideration:

- Individuals at risk of being in or exiting the criminal justice system.
- Children and youth involved with either the juvenile justice system or the child welfare system.
- Individuals with a primary diagnosis of SUD.

What habitability standards does BHBH Program-funded housing need to meet?

All bridge housing, including tiny homes, trailers, and hotel rooms, must meet the [Emergency Solutions Grants \(ESG\) Minimum Habitability Standards](#) and local zoning regulations and, when possible and as applicable, should also meet [Continuum of Care \(CoC\) Housing Quality Standards \(HQS\)](#) (see page 10). This does not necessarily require all utility hook-ups for individual units. The BHBH Program may alter these requirements if/when changes to the federal standards occur.

Are people required to participate in services to receive BHBH Program-funded housing?

The BHBH Program follows Housing First principles (see Attachment B), including providing access to housing that is not contingent on participation in services and making voluntary services available (such as Housing Navigation services). Note that BHBH funding may be used to support recovery residences and sober living environments for individuals with significant substance use disorder treatment needs.

Please clarify BHBH Program requirements related to homelessness and the CARE program, as CARE is not limited to people experiencing homelessness.

BHBH Program funding must be used to serve individuals with serious behavioral health conditions, including serious mental illness and/or substance use disorder, who are experiencing homelessness. According to CARE Program requirements, specified by [SB 1338](#) (Umberg, Chapter 319, Statutes of 2022), participants must be prioritized for BHBH Program-funded bridge housing.

Are county behavioral health agencies required to participate in the Coordinated Entry System (CES) to request BHBH Program funding?

There is no BHBH requirement that counties participate in the CES; however, collaboration with

the CES may help county BHAs support the individuals they serve who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness, including BHBH participants. Note that the BHBH Program does require county BHAs to implement and actively participate in the HMIS in accordance with the ongoing implementation of [AB 977](#) (Gabriel, Chapter 397, Statutes of 2021; see BHBH Program Round 1 [RFA](#)).

If we have a studio with two beds or a unit with two bedrooms, would we count the operational expense by beds in the unit or studio?

In the event that a county is using BHBH Program funds for interim housing, operations costs should be based on actual expenses regardless of housing type. Please note, “bridge housing may include individual units, shared living (with private or smaller-occupancy rooms), individual rooms in homes, or tiny homes” (Attachment C, page 14).

Are all BHBH-funded beds required to be online within one year of contract execution or just beds that require infrastructure expenditures?

The BHBH Program requires all start-up infrastructure beds be available within one year of contract execution (see page 6, under “Program Requirements”). Failure to expend funds expeditiously may result in a modification of BHBH Program funding.

Do all sites, including recovery residences, housing through rental assistance, and/or motels with a BHBH-funded voucher need to meet ADA requirements?

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) applies to all state and local governments and stipulates that these entities, and their contracted providers, must give “reasonable accommodations” to all individuals with a disability (see RFA page 17). For the BHBH Program, we recommend that you speak to your county counsel’s office to determine how your program must adhere to ADA and other regulatory requirements.

Could you elaborate on how we should be thinking about sober living/recovery residences in the context of this program? Who decides whether this is the most appropriate available option?

It is the County’s responsibility to assess local needs and resources. Appropriate placement should be client led and based on client needs and interests. When meeting the Housing First principles and supporting person-centered approaches, recovery residences should be one option but not the *only* option available to an individual. County BHAs are encouraged to discuss the need for recovery residences with SUD staff and contractors working with the county.

Does WIC Section 8255 apply to sober living/recovery residences? Can recovery residences require participation in 12-step meetings? If recovery residences are

exempt from all of these rules, it seems like any and all BHBH programs could be designated recovery residences such that it is possible that there wouldn't be any BHBH housing that is low barrier or that practices Housing First in a given county. Is that correct?

Housing provided under the BHBH Program must adhere to the Housing First principles (RFA page 10). [Welfare and Institutions Code Section 8256](#) does expand and clarify certain aspects of the Housing First law as it relates to Sober Living and Recovery Housing environments. We anticipate that County BHAs would need to provide services in many different formats to most effectively serve the BHBH-eligible population.

Do counties need to provide estimates of the number of beds to be included and other aspects of their proposed BHBH Programs?

County BHAs are expected to describe the planned use of BHBH Program funding, including an estimate of beds to be created, in their proposals, and should be as specific as possible. See Attachment D (page 18) for a list of application questions related to program design.

When funding programs that increase the bed count, do the beds need to be in our jurisdiction or can they be reserved in another county for those who are from our jurisdiction?

County BHAs are encouraged to collaborate, where feasible, with neighboring counties' agencies, area Continuums of Care (CoCs) and other agencies addressing homelessness. Counties may work directly with other counties to create regional models. However, please note "BHBH programs must be developed in a manner that allows for choice, enables people to stay in their 'home' communities, and provides for community integration in accordance with all applicable federal and state regulations" (Attachment C, page 13). It is a best practice to keep people closer to their support networks and home environments, and these should be taken into consideration when placing an individual in an environment outside the county in which they reside.

Application Process

How do I apply?

The application, attachments, and instructions for submitting a completed application can be found on the [BHBH website](#). The application portal, housed on SurveyMonkey Apply, opened on February 2, 2024. The application portal allows you to upload documents and save drafts prior to submission; a 10-minute demonstration of how to use the [portal is available here](#). In addition, Attachment D of the RFA (pp. 18-20) lists the application questions. You are encouraged to download the full RFA to review the instructions and use the file to draft your responses. You can then copy your answers into the portal when you are ready to submit an application.

If I need reasonable accommodations, where can I request alternative materials?

DHCS will provide assistive services such as reading or writing assistance and conversion of the RFA, questions/answers, RFA addenda, or other Administrative Notices in Braille, large print, audiocassette, or computer disk, will be provided as needed. To request copies of written materials in an alternate format, please send an email to BHBHinfo@ahpnet.com or call (323) 545-6202.

Where can I find more information about the application process?

An informational webinar was held Thursday, February 15, 2024, to provide general information about the Round 3: Strategic Enhancements RFA. The recording is available on the [BHBH Program website](#).

Is it possible to speak with someone about my particular project?

Please submit all technical and programmatic questions to the BHBH Program RFA 3 Help Desk. Please note that responses may be limited because this is a competitive round of funding.

Do counties seeking to establish multiple programs with different vendors need to submit separate applications?

County BHAs should submit one application that includes all aspects of their BHBH Programs.

Can BHBH Program funds be used as match?

BHBH funds cannot be used as a match for Medi-Cal services, but could serve as match for other programs or funding sources as described below:

- There is nothing that precludes a grantee from combining BHBH Program funds with other funding sources, such as for Start-Up infrastructure, as long as program expenditures meet the identified “[Allowable BHBH Program Activities](#)” in RFA Attachment C.
- BHBH Program funds do not have a match requirement, and the Round 3 RFA does not identify any restrictions in using BHBH funds as a match for other funding opportunities.
- In instances in which other funding sources identify match opportunities, the determination of whether or not BHBH Program funds (when used as specified in the RFA) are an appropriate match source would be determined by the Agency/ Department with oversight for that specific funding source.

In the event counties are proposing to use BHBH Program funds as a match source for other funding opportunities, DHCS will expect to see counties specify this information in their BHBH Program application to ensure an understanding of how all BHBH Program funding will be applied to meet the identified goals.

Does an application need to be submitted by a county behavioral health agency employee? What if a county is working with a contractor who would like to submit on their behalf?

Yes, the application should be submitted by a county BHA employee. Ideally the lead designated during RFA Round 1. However, county BHAs may hire a contractor to support the development of their application. The Round 3 RFA requires an applicant to sign in and complete the required questions and upload required documents, after which, the user will certify and attest that all materials are correct and accurate.

Mental Health Services Act (MHSA); federally funded programs; or other state or local programs.

What happens if we apply for BHBH Program funding with the intent to use it as a match for another funding source and we do not receive the other funding?

The BHBH Program does not have a match requirement. Nothing precludes BHBH Program funds from being combined with other funding sources, such as for the purchase of infrastructure, as long as program expenditures meet the identified “Allowable BHBH Program Activities” enumerated in Attachment C, and the other program allows BHBH funds to be used

as match. The RFA 3 application budget requires the inclusion of information related to other funding sources used in conjunction with BHBH funding requests.

Do we need to submit a signed attestation with our application for Round 3, as we did for Round 1?

No. You do not need to submit a new attestation form with your completed Round 3 application. The attestation has been removed as a part of the RFA 3

Budget/Allowable Uses

What is the maximum grant amount a county can apply for?

County BHAs may apply for any amount up to the maximum available for that county's size, as listed in RFA Attachment A (page 9). There is no obligation on the part of a county BHA to apply for the entire amount available to counties in its size category. If you have further questions, please contact the BHBH Program RFA 3 Help Desk.

Can infrastructure funds be requested only in Track 2 applications?

Infrastructure-related expenses are eligible under the BHBH Program for those county BHAs applying under both Track 1 (BHBH Program Operations) and Track 2 (Start-Up Infrastructure) (see RFA page 6).

Applicants that need less than \$25,000 for minor renovations may request that funding as a Track 1 direct cost (see RFA page 23), and do not need to submit a Track 2 application. See

"Track 2: Bridge Housing Start-Up Infrastructure" in Attachment C (page 15) for more information, including requirements and limitations. Applications requesting funds for infrastructure only (Track 2) will not be accepted.

What are examples of allowable bridge housing start-up infrastructure expenditures?

Examples of allowable bridge housing start-up infrastructure costs include the initial purchase of furniture, equipment, and appliances; the purchase and placement of tiny homes and related utility hookups and supportive facilities; costs related to facility renovations, including allowable adaptive reuse; and for bridge housing, so long as the BHA anticipates the start-up will be completed and the bridge housing brought online within one year of contract/contract modification execution. These allowable expenditures must fit within the \$75,000-per-bed limit.

See Attachment C (pages 15-17) for more information about infrastructure funding requirements and exceptions.

Are the housing "settings" required to be already-built structures, or can BHBH Program funds be used to buy or build new structures?

The BHBH Program is not intended to support the development of new infrastructure. BHBH Program funds may be used for existing settings that are leased or owned by a county BHA or a partner that can be converted into bridge housing on a faster timeline than a new capital project.

Additionally, costs may not exceed \$75,000 per bed, as noted in Attachment C, page 15.

Is hiring a new case manager an allowable use of BHBH Program funds?

Hiring new housing case managers is an allowable use of BHBH Program funds. BHBH Program grantees are expected to provide housing navigation services to assist people in identifying housing options, resources, and other services. Housing navigators that work with

individuals to find, move into, and retain affordable housing are an integral part of this program. See Attachment B (page 11) for the definition of “housing navigation” for purposes of the BHBH Program. See Attachment C for more information on allowable BHBH Program activities.

Can BHBH Program funds be used for services covered by Medi-Cal Community Supports?

BHBH Program funds are not intended to supplant existing county, state, or federal funds to provide housing or services. Instead, BHBH funds may be used: (1) to support complementary activities or enhanced investments of existing work if, for example, existing funds do not fully reimburse activities, or (2) to support additional or different services beyond those that would be funded. For example, if a Medi-Cal member is not eligible for housing-related Community Supports offered in their county but clearly needs services, their provider could use BHBH funding for these services. BHBH funds could also be used if a Medi-Cal member is eligible for housing-related Community Supports but requires services beyond those covered by Medi-Cal. Additionally, BHBH funds can be used if an individual has already used Medi-Cal Community Supports with a "once in a lifetime" restriction. Finally, if a Medi-Cal member's health plan does not offer Community Supports, BHBH funds can be leveraged.

What is an allowable use of funds for Landlord Outreach and Mitigation Funds?

Generally, outreach to engage landlords in renting to BHBH participants may include the following: outreach materials, advertising, and campaigns; presentations, exhibits, and networking events to encourage landlords/owners/management companies to consider renting to BHBH participants; security deposits (including eligibility, maximum amounts); and incentives, referral, multi-unit and/or signing bonuses. For more information, see RFA page 24.

Can BHBH Program funds be used to cover administrative or indirect costs? If so, how do we calculate indirect costs?

Administrative costs are allowable in Track 2, and are limited to 10 percent of the total start-up infrastructure funding request. Track 1 indirect costs are limited to 10 percent of modified direct costs. For more information on allowable BHBH Program activities and preparing the budget, see Attachment C and Attachment E.

Indirect costs are defined as “general management costs necessary for the general operation of the agency, such as accounting, budgeting, payroll preparation, personnel services, purchasing, legal fees, and centralized data processing” (RFA page 22). The indirect rate is calculated based on the program costs and excludes the pass-through funding categories (rental assistance, participant assistance funds, and landlord outreach and mitigation funds). For example, if your county has \$1,000,000 planned for the Rental Assistance program and

\$900,000 is to be spent on direct funding to a property owner, then the indirect rate would be calculated based on 10 percent of the remaining \$100,000, or \$10,000:

$$(\$1,000,000 - \$900,000) \times 0.10 = \$10,000$$

Can BHBH Program funds be used for outreach and engagement staff salaries?

Up to 5 percent of Track 1: BHBH Program Operations awards may be spent on outreach and engagement. Outreach and engagement services may be carried out by staff of the BHBH site or services provider, but BHBH Program funding should be the funding of last resort for these services. Other funding sources, such as Medi-Cal, must be used first, and BHBH Program funding cannot supplant existing funding, as noted in the RFA (page 3).

Can BHBH Program funds be used to develop partnerships?

BHBH funds may be used to support the development of partnerships (RFA page 13). However, funding must adhere to the limitations that are outlined in the RFA and the budget. Documentation requirements will be based on the program details and specific RFA requirements. Time to build and implement partnership activities necessary for the implementation of bridge housing may be considered direct bridge housing operations costs.

Can BHBH funds be used for Crisis-Residential or Transitional Residential Treatment?

The BHBH Program funds may not be used to supplant existing federal, state, or county funds used to provide housing or services, including through Medi-Cal (e.g., Enhanced Care Management, Targeted Case Management, and Community Supports); programs funded under the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA); federally funded programs; or other state or local programs. Crisis-Residential or Transitional Residential Treatment is generally covered through other funding sources and therefore would not be allowable as a part of the BHBH Program. However, the specific related crisis housing and housing support for individuals engaged in crisis services would be allowable costs. See Attachment C (page 13) for more information.

Is there a minimum or maximum stay for bridge housing?

No. County BHAs are encouraged to allow flexible lengths of stay in bridge housing settings to ensure there's time for housing navigation and placement services and that individuals are exited to permanent housing to the greatest extent possible. Please see the definitions for

“short-term” and “mid-term” in Attachment B for additional information.

Can BHBH funds be used to purchase or lease bridge housing settings and provide for staffing needs?

BHBH funding budgeted toward bridge housing start-up infrastructure may be used to purchase bridge housing settings. BHBH Program funds budgeted for bridge housing may be used to lease facilities and provide for staff, operations, and client needs. For more information about allowable expenses and budgeting allowances, see Attachment E. For more information on start-up infrastructure fund requirements, see Attachment C. Please note that all BHBH funds must be expended by June 30, 2027.

Can BHBH Program funds be used for Institution for Mental Disease (IMD)/Mental Health Rehabilitation Centers (MHRC)?

The BHBH Program funds may not be used to supplant existing federal, state, or county funds used to provide housing or services, including through Medi-Cal (e.g., Enhanced Care Management, Targeted Case Management, and Community Supports; RFA page 3); programs funded under the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA); federally funded programs; or other state or local programs. Because IMD/MHRC is covered through other funding sources, it would not be allowable as a part of the BHBH Program.

What are the options for counties that want to lease to own?

The goal of the BHBH Program is to support the immediate needs of individuals who are experiencing homelessness and have one or more serious behavioral health conditions. The RFA does allow for either leased or owned property, with the goal of providing bridge housing on a faster timeline. Each county will have different infrastructure availability and may choose different strategies for the BHBH program.

It is important to note that all leasing costs must be reasonable and appropriate for the area in which a project is located, and all BHBH funds must be expended by June 30, 2027. These

requirements may impact the ability of a county BHA to operate a lease-to-own strategy. Additionally, any purchase of property would be subject to the Start-Up infrastructure funding category requirements, while other leasing environments would be within the Bridge Housing operations category.

Can rental assistance funding be used for family financial housing supports, such as reimbursing a room rental for a family member?

As part of the BHBH Program, rental assistance funds can be used to support an individual's placement with their family (page 14). Additionally, family reunification can also be a longer-term sustainability process for individuals who have been estranged from their families while experiencing homelessness and serious behavioral health conditions. Family reunification can be an outcome of the BHBH Program as a whole, in addition to the rental assistance components, and when appropriate for the person being served can be a strategy for long-term sustainability. The policies for fraud, waste, and abuse for cases should be clearly outlined by the county.

Are vehicle purchases or leasing an allowable infrastructure expense?

Vehicle leasing is an allowable cost for BHBH Program funds. Vehicles cannot be purchased with BHBH Program funding.

Can the BHBH Program serve individuals who have undocumented status?

Yes, BHBH Program funds can be used for individuals who are undocumented, as long as they fit the definition of the population to be served.

On several tabs of the budget template there is a question regarding service detail estimates. What information are you looking for in these service detail questions?

The service detail data is required on several of the budget tabs and should be an estimate of the numbers of bed-nights and individuals served for each of the BHBH Program fiscal years. See Attachment E for more information about completing the budget.

We applied for infrastructure funding in Round 1, and the price has since gone up for our settings (pallet structures). Can we apply for Round 3 funding to support these infrastructure costs or to support operations for Round 1?

Applicants who choose to apply for start-up infrastructure funding must submit a corresponding bridge housing operations request that is specific to their start-up infrastructure site/setting. Round 3 applications may expand on programs or settings that were originally part of a Round 1 application. However, Round 3 funds may not be used to offset the costs of a Round 1 program setting.

If we apply for start-up infrastructure funds for Round 3, does the bridge housing operations funding need to be connected to that infrastructure project, or can we use it to fund the start-up infrastructure project, and use other funding for operational costs?

County BHAs that apply for start-up infrastructure funding in Round 3 must submit a corresponding bridge housing operations application. BHBH Program funding can be braided with additional funding sources if they are available and doing so is appropriate.

If we expend all program funds before the completion of the program/project, can we discontinue the project without penalty? That is, if we expend the BHBH

operations funds prior to June 30, 2027, will we be expected to continue to provide services outlined in the RFA through June 2027?

Services are expected to be provided as described and approved in the BHBH Program Plan, which is to be inclusive of project timelines. DHCS reserves the right to withhold future BHBH Program funds if an awardee does not meet its obligations to the BHBH Program.