

CALIFORNIA AWARDS \$2.5 MILLION TO STRENGTHEN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

DHCS also Releases Two Opioid/Substance Use Prevention Grant Opportunities

SACRAMENTO — The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) today awarded more than \$2.5 million to 103 hospitals with emergency departments (EDs), with each receiving \$25,000 to implement strategies to sustain the [CalBridge Behavioral Health Navigator Program](#) (CalBridge) and maintain behavioral health navigators working with individuals. To date, 385 hospitals have received funding under the CalBridge program.

“The awards will continue to strengthen and expand the ability of participating emergency departments to provide and sustain critical behavioral health navigator services,” said **DHCS Director Michelle Baass**.

HOW GRANTS HELP: CalBridge provides DHCS-funded grants to EDs to expand training for behavioral health navigators to provide access to substance abuse disorder (SUD) and mental health treatment services. The latest round of supplemental grant funding will aid EDs by ensuring that their behavioral health navigator services are funded on a long-term basis and incorporated into the ED budget as permanent positions that are not dependent upon grant funds. Behavioral health navigators are critical to an effective ED Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) and opioid use disorder program and provide vital services, such as:

- Identifying, screening, and interviewing patients with SUDs and co-occurring mental health conditions and linking them to appropriate treatment.
- Implementing consistent delivery of MAT (the use of medications in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies), which is effective in the treatment of opioid use disorders (OUD), and can help some people sustain recovery.
- Adopting new models for reaching historically disadvantaged populations.
- Building an environment that welcomes disclosure of substance use and provides rapid evidence-based treatment.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT: These awards are part of a larger effort by the California Health & Human Services Agency to strengthen California’s health and human services workforce. CalBridge aims to train, diversify, and expand the ED workforce to address the urgent need for behavioral health patient care. By sustaining the number of behavioral health navigators in EDs, people with a SUD or OUD, or who are experiencing a mental health crisis, will have access to appropriate care to address their needs. CalBridge supports all participating hospitals with access to materials, training, and technical assistance for navigators, clinicians, nurses, community health workers, and other hospital staff and stakeholders.

This supplemental funding round by CalBridge expands the ability of previously funded EDs to create a permanent foundation of sustainability by developing ED capacities to partner with community and government organizations to hire behavioral health navigators, leverage Medi-Cal and other behavioral health funding, and explore other emerging innovative behavioral health navigator hiring sustainability practices. CalBridge is funded by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 under key initiatives for Medi-Cal's Home and Community-Based Services.

ADDITIONAL GRANT OPPORTUNITIES: DHCS also released funding opportunities for two opioid and stimulant use disorder community-based prevention programs. Both projects are part of DHCS' broader efforts to address SUD, collectively known as the [California MAT Expansion Project](#), to increase access to MAT, reduce unmet treatment need, and reduce opioid overdose-related deaths through the provision of prevention, treatment, and recovery activities.

Opioid Use and Stimulant Use Education and Outreach in 2S/LGBTQ+ Communities Project

More than 1.8 million individuals in California identify as part of the 2S/LGBTQ+ population. In comparison to heterosexual individuals nationwide, lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults report higher rates of stimulant use and SUDs. 2S/LGBTQ+ adults with SUD are also more likely to have co-occurring psychiatric disorders and are at an increased risk of contracting HIV and hepatitis C. Some factors contributing to opioid use and stimulant use in the 2S/LGBTQ+ community include mental illness, risk of experiencing violence, structural stigma, and discrimination.

This project is designed to support 2S/LGBTQ+ organizations to develop or expand upon outreach and education activities for OUDs, SUDs, and stimulant use disorder while creating tangible links to SUD services and treatment providers specifically within 2S/LGBTQ+ communities. The overall goals of this funding opportunity are to:

- Increase awareness and education about opioids and stimulants in 2S/LGBTQ+ communities.
- Decrease stigma related to drug-use and SUD care and treatment in 2S/LGBTQ+ communities.
- Integrate and strengthen treatment referral pathways for OUD and stimulant use disorder in 2S/LGBTQ+ communities.

This Request for Application ([RFA](#)) has a total of \$5 million in available funds to be awarded to 25 to 35 organizations, with a maximum of up to \$200,000 per organization. Contracts will cover activities for the period of July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024.

Opioid and Stimulant Use Disorder Prevention for Communities of Color Project

In California, more than 10,000 people died from all-drug overdoses from October 2020 to September 2021. Fentanyl accounted for 53 percent of those overdose deaths, an increase of 316 percent from the annual rate in September 2019. Psychostimulant deaths increased by 92 percent and cocaine deaths by 59 percent.

Communities of color have faced historical and ongoing trauma, systemic racism, and criminalization. This trauma is perpetuated by the lack of investment in community-based prevention, intervention, and treatment access, especially for culturally responsive, healing-centered, and trauma-informed approaches, and through ongoing stigma related to seeking SUD treatment in American culture.

This project is designed to support programs to implement community-based outreach, education, and referrals to address opioid use, stimulant use, and polysubstance use. This funding opportunity is focused on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities that are disproportionately impacted by the negative consequences of drug use and criminalization of SUDs, and that often have less access to treatment and information about opioid and stimulant use and support. These also include Native American, African American, Latinx, and Asian-Pacific Islander communities in California. The overall goals of this funding opportunity are to:

- Increase individual and community understanding of opioids and opioid use, stimulants and stimulant use, and/or polysubstance use in BIPOC communities, prioritizing harm reduction and public health solutions that focus on positive messages to prevent SUD.
- Reduce community and individual stigma of people who use drugs and care and treatment services.
- Increase knowledge of treatment services, particularly MAT and stimulant use disorder treatment, including where and how to access services, as well as integrating and strengthening referral pathways to community SUD care treatment providers to prevent or stop disordered use.

This [RFA](#) has a total of \$12 million in available funds to be awarded to 50 to 60 organizations, with a maximum of up to \$250,000 per organization. Contracts will cover activities for the period of July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024.

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND: Since coming into office, Governor Gavin Newsom has dedicated more than \$1 billion in funding to fight the opioid crisis by removing opioids from the streets, providing resources to California communities in need, and increasing education and awareness to prevent harm in the first place. In fiscal year 2022-23, DHCS is investing more than \$558 million in various opioid prevention and treatment grant activities.

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