

Behavioral Health Services Act Community Planning Process

What is the BHSA?

The Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) is a state law that funds local programs that support mental health and substance use recovery for Californians in each county. These programs include treatment services and supports such as counseling, housing, crisis services, as well as prevention programs in a variety of in-home, schools, and community-based settings. Counties must work closely with the local residents, interested parties, and stakeholders in their community to develop an Integrated Plan for how the BHSA may support people with behavioral health needs.

What is the Integrated Plan?

The [Integrated Plan](#) is a three-year plan created by each county behavioral health department. It describes how a county will use BHSA and other funding sources to support behavioral health services in the community. The plan includes:

- A description of programs and services to be funded and where the funding comes from.
- Information about the county's population and its behavioral health needs.
- The county's goals and strategies for measuring success.
- Information about how the county will work with the public to develop the plan.

To make sure the Integrated Plan truly reflects local needs, counties must engage the community through a **Community Planning Process (CPP)**. This process brings together residents, service providers, and people with lived experience to share ideas, feedback, and priorities. The process to create the plan takes about a year and includes several steps.

The first Integrated Plan for Fiscal Years 2026-2029 is being prepared now. The draft plan is due March 31, 2026, and will be finalized by **June 30, 2026**. After the county drafts its Integrated Plan, the plan must be available for public comment for 30 days. At the end of this comment period, the **Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB)** will hold a public hearing to review feedback and allow community members to speak before the plan is finalized.

Let Your Voice Be Heard

Your voice matters! Share your lived experience and ideas to help your county understand what programs and services truly work and what needs to grow, change or expand in your community. Counties cannot create strong Integrated Plans without the people who know their community best. ***Your voice can help make the Integrated Plan meaningful, inclusive, and effective.*** Ready to get involved? The following steps are suggestions on how to get involved.

How to Get Involved

Step 1: Get Connected

Contact your [County BHSA Coordinator](#) to:

- **Sign Up for Updates**

Join newsletters and mailing lists to stay informed about your county's planning process.

Example of What You Can Say: "Hello, my name is _____. I am interested in learning more about the Community Planning Process for the Behavioral Health Services Act. I would like to sign up for your newsletter or mailing list to receive updates about the county's planning process. Could you please add me to the list?"

- **Learn about the Community Planning Process**

Ask questions and share your ideas. You can:

- Request an overview of the planning process and its goals.
- Ask how community input shapes behavioral health services.
- Share your thoughts or concerns about local needs.

Example of What You Can Say: "Hello, my name is _____. I am interested in learning more about the Community Planning Process for the Behavioral Health Services Act. Could you explain how the process works and how I can give you my ideas. Can you tell me how my feedback is used?"

- **Get Details about Community Planning Meeting**

Request details about upcoming BHSA planning meetings, how you may participate, and any other opportunities to provide feedback. Many counties offer virtual meetings you can join on your phone or computer.

Example of What You Can Say when you call: "Hello, I would like to know when the next Community Planning meeting is scheduled. Can you tell me how I can attend, is there an option to join online? Are there other ways I can provide feedback besides attending meetings, such as surveys, focus groups, or written comments? I would like to make sure my input is included in your plan."

Step 2: Share Your Story

Make your voice heard by sharing your story:

- **Attend local community planning meetings and complete surveys (if available)**

Share your experiences with your local behavioral health services agency. Talk about what's working well and what could be better.

Tips: Introduce yourself, describe the problem or issue (if there is one), discuss your experience with your county behavioral health services, and share what you would like to see offered in your community.

- **Attend your local Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB) Hearings**

Visit the [California's Local Behavioral Health Boards & Commissions Directory](#) to find your county behavioral health board's website and get details about the local board hearing.

- A draft of the proposed Integrated Plan will be available for public comments for 30 days. After the comment period, your local board will host a public hearing on the draft Integrated Plan. ***This is your opportunity to review the plan and share your thoughts.***

Step 3: Ask for help if you need it!

Contact your [County BHSA Coordinator](#) if you need help to fully participate in the planning process. You have the **right to request assistance**. Some types of support include interpreter assistance, transportation, and childcare.

Examples of What You Can Say:

- *"Hello, I want to participate in the BHSA planning process, but English is not my first language. Do you have interpreters?"*
- *"I would like to attend the BHSA planning meeting, but I don't have transportation. Can you tell me what transportation assistance options are available?"*
- *"I want to join the BHSA planning meeting, but I need childcare during that time. Does the county offer childcare support or resources? If not, can I bring my children with me?"*

For more information about the Integrated Plan, please visit the California Behavioral Health Planning Council's [Integrated Plans Webpage](#) for Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) resources. You may also learn more through the [Integrated Plan Webinar Series](#) provided by DHCS.