

## **CALIFORNIA INVESTS ADDITIONAL \$33 MILLION IN MENTORED INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

*Organizations Utilize Grants to Recruit Students to the Behavioral Health Workforce*

**SACRAMENTO** — The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) awarded an additional \$33 million to 120 nonprofit provider and tribal organizations, extending the existing behavioral health workforce Mentored Internship Program to organizations that successfully completed the first round of the program. Each entity will receive up to \$500,000 to enhance and build its behavioral health substance use disorder workforce, focusing on resources that expand the prevention, treatment, and recovery workforce to support Californians with or at risk of developing an opioid use disorder.

“We are pleased to continue supporting these successful programs aimed at recruiting new workers into behavioral health settings,” said **DHCS Director Michelle Baass**. “The professional development of diverse students through thoughtful, mentored internships will further assist with mitigating the crisis our state is facing by providing comprehensive training to future behavioral health professionals to serve California’s many diverse communities.”

### **INVESTMENTS MAKING A DIFFERENCE:**

- “Due to our intern cohort’s diversity of background, language capacity, and therapeutic specialties, we have increased our ability to provide timely individualized and culturally relevant services to our diverse range of clients’ culturally linguistic and therapeutic needs,” said **Michelle Seidman, Director of Talent Acquisition at HealthRIGHT 360**, which has three Mentored Internship Program programs at their San Francisco, Pasadena, and Pomona locations.
- “One recent accomplishment was beginning an adolescent anger management group, led by two of our Mentored Internship Program interns who were able to adapt our adult anger management curriculum to meet the demands of an adolescent group. Our Mentored Internship Program interns also redesigned our case management and referral process to better serve our clients,” said **Megan Tatum, Administrative Director of the Sierra Meadows Foundation in Clovis**.

**WHY THIS MATTERS:** DHCS is investing in organizations in underserved and diverse communities across California. Today's awards represent one part of DHCS' broad strategy to expand California's behavioral health workforce by providing practical on-the-job experience to students at multiple stages of their education.

**ABOUT THE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM:** The Mentored Internship Program was established in 2022 in response to various California-specific behavioral health workforce needs assessments and recommendations that revealed a shortage of professionals across the spectrum of behavioral health careers. The Mentored Internship Program aims to develop and implement an internship program to assist in the treatment and recovery of patients with substance use, mental health, or co-occurring disorders. Organizations will identify mentors for interns in various positions, such as peer recovery specialists, outreach workers, case managers, and counselors. Students in such fields as social work, public health, and psychology are encouraged to serve as interns, along with students enrolled at community colleges and four-year colleges and universities, as well as current high school students or recent high school graduates.

**WHAT IS THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE:** The Mentored Internship Program grants are part of the [Behavioral Health Workforce Development initiative](#) funded by Opioid Settlement Funds. The initiative is part of DHCS' work to expand California's behavioral health workforce, improve access to behavioral health services across the state, and deploy resources that behavioral health employers can utilize to recruit and retain their workforce. These awards align with the state's broad strategy to build a health workforce that represents California's diverse communities and provides people with the quality care they deserve, while addressing the shortage of health workers across California.

Since 2021, the State of California has invested more than \$197 million through the Behavioral Health Workforce Development initiative, funding 288 organizations across California to recruit, mentor, and retain behavioral health professionals, including making a significant investment in the peer workforce who offer treatment to individuals with substance use and opioid addiction.

**BIGGER PICTURE:** Since assuming 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 fiscal year 2022-23, DHCS invested more than \$558 million in various opioid prevention and treatment grant activities.

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