



# California Behavioral Health Planning Council

ADVOCACY • EVALUATION • INCLUSION

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**CHAIRPERSON**

Deborah Starkey

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**MS 2706**

May 29, 2024

Michelle Baass, Director  
Department of Health Care Services  
1501 Capitol Ave MS 0000  
Sacramento, CA 95899-7413

**RE: Request for Inclusion in Proposition 1 Stakeholder Engagement Process and the Development of Regulations and Policies**

Dear Director Baass:

On behalf of the California Behavioral Health Planning Council (Council), I respectfully request the inclusion of the Council in the development of Behavioral Health Transformation (Proposition 1) stakeholder engagement planning and implementation process as well as the development of regulations and policies.

Pursuant to state law, the Council is a majority consumer and family member advisory body to state and local government, the State Legislature, and residents of California on behavioral health services. Our membership is diverse, reflecting the varied interests within the behavioral health community across the state. At least half of the Council members are either family members, direct consumers of behavioral health services, or representatives from organizations advocating for individuals with mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) challenges. Additionally, members include professional providers serving behavioral health consumers, including substance use disorder providers, Social Rehabilitation agencies, California Behavioral Health Directors Association liaisons, and the California Coalition for Behavioral Health.

The Council serves as a vital platform for public involvement in behavioral health planning and policy development. We firmly believe there is value in including persons with lived experience of Serious Mental Illness, parents of children with Severe Emotional Disturbances and substance use disorder, as well as advocates, in the development of policies and regulations that impact services in California.



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## **Stakeholder Engagement:**

We urge the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), Department of Veteran Affairs (CalVet), and the Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS) to develop a process to engage stakeholders in meaningful discussions early to ensure successful implementation of the Behavioral Health Transformation (Proposition 1). This would include:

- Consulting with the Council and other established bodies before formulating regulations.
- Producing clear, plain language documents to educate the public about the changes from the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) to the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA).
- Developing clear and concise plain-language documents to inform the public about the Behavioral Health Infrastructure Bond Act (BHIBA).
- Distributing draft materials from state departments promptly for stakeholder input.
- Hosting statewide opportunities to collect input from consumers and family members and sharing the feedback with the relevant state department staff responsible for key implementation decisions.

## **Regulations and Policy Development:**

Considering the substantial changes in the BHSA, the Council's role as outlined in the Welfare and Institutions Code, and the composition of the Council's membership, we respectfully request your consideration of our involvement in the development of regulations, policies, and stakeholder engagement planning and implementation.

The Council also urges our state partners and leaders to consider the following recommendations when drafting Behavioral Health Transformation regulations.

- Adopt Behavioral Health Bridge Housing (BHBH) Program's Definition of Homelessness.
- Adopt No Place Like Home (NPLH) Program's Definition of At-Risk of Chronic Homelessness for the Definition of Chronic Homelessness.
- Broaden the Definition of Veteran to include all individuals who have served in the military no matter their discharge status.



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- Allow mandated service requirements to assist homeless persons with significant challenges to retain housing.

The Council will provide comments in a subsequent letter about suggested changes to Housing First requirements under this program in late June, after our next Quarterly meeting.

We believe these recommendations will strengthen the Behavioral Health Transformation to ensure all Californians can access and receive high-quality services to lead full and purposeful lives.

Thank you for considering our request. If you have any questions, please contact Jenny Bayardo, Executive Officer, at (916) 750-3778 or [Jenny.Bayardo@cbhpc.dhcs.ca.gov](mailto:Jenny.Bayardo@cbhpc.dhcs.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

Deborah Starkey  
Chairperson

CC: Gustavo Velasquez, Director, HCD  
Lindsey Sin, Secretary, CalVet  
Paula Wilhelm, Interim Deputy Director, Behavioral Health, DHCS  
Marlies Perez, CEA, DHCS  
[BHTinfo@dhcs.ca.gov](mailto:BHTinfo@dhcs.ca.gov)

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