

**California Behavioral Health Planning Council
Workforce and Employment Committee – Work Plan 2025-2026**

Committee Overview and Purpose

The efforts and activities of the Workforce and Employment Committee (WEC) will address both the workforce shortage and training in the public behavioral health system, including the future of funding, and the employment of individuals with psychiatric disabilities and substance use disorder (SUD) conditions. Additionally, state law provides the Council with specific responsibilities in advising the Office of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI) on education and training policy development and to provide oversight for the development of the Five-Year Education and Training Development Plan as well as review and approval authority of the final plan. The Workforce and Employment Committee will be the group to work closely with the Department of Health Care Access and Information staff to provide input, feedback and guidance and to be the conduit for presenting information to the full Council membership as it relates to its responsibilities set in law.

The Council has collateral partners involved in addressing the behavioral health workforce shortage in California. A number of these partners have been working with the Council in prior efforts and provide additional subject matter expertise. These individuals and organizations, collectively known as the Workforce Education and Training (WET) Steering Committee, will continue to provide the committee with expertise and are invited to participate in meetings, where appropriate.

Additionally, there are organizations and educational institutions, at the State level, who are engaged in efforts for the employment of individuals with disabilities, including psychiatric disabilities, with whom the Workforce and Employment Committee will maintain relationships to identify areas of commonality, opportunities for collaboration and blending of actions. They include but are not limited to:

- Department of Rehabilitation
 - a) State Rehabilitation Council
 - b) Cooperative Programs
- California Workforce Development Board
- Labor Workforce Development Agency
- Behavioral Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (BHSOAC)
- County Behavioral Health Director's Association (10-Year Strategic Workforce Plan)

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Strategic Goal 1.0: Provide leadership and collaborate with other stakeholders to support the growth, retention, quality, and preparation of California's behavioral health workforce, reduce the workforce shortage and build sustained mechanism for ongoing workforce education and training to ensure a trauma-informed, person-centered, diverse, and recovery-oriented workforce.

Objective 1.1: Review and make recommendations to the full Council regarding approval of the Department of Health Care Access and Information's Workforce Education and Training (WET) Plan:

- a. Engage in regular dialogue and collaborating with the Workforce Education and Training (WET) Steering Committee.
- b. Maintain an open line of communication with the Department of Health Care Access and Information via Council staff to advise on education and training policy development and provide oversight for education and training plan development.
- c. Participate in the statewide stakeholder engagement process.
 - i. Host a presentation and round-table discussion at the Council's General Session Meeting to initiate the Council's feedback for the development of the 2026-2030 Workforce Education and Training Five-Year Plan.
- d. Build the Council's understanding of state-level workforce initiatives and their successes and challenges.

Objective 1.2: Build Council's understanding of workforce development 'best practices' for both entry-level preparation and continuing competency, including but not limited to the resources from the Annapolis Coalition on the Behavioral Health Workforce, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) Mental Health Program, based on national and state-level workforce development resources developed in California.

Objective 1.3: Build the Council's understanding of County-specific workforce development initiatives and their successes and challenges to advocate best practices that may be standardized across local agencies in consideration of different needs in local and urban areas.

- a. Invite local counties to report on successful workforce development initiatives for new and existing providers and to report on diversity and equity in their demographic data.

Objective 1.4: Monitor and determine advocacy needs regarding data that shows the gaps of the hard-to-fill behavioral health professions on a statewide level including information about local partnerships providing education and training opportunities.

- a. Use the County Behavioral Health Director's Association's [Workforce Needs Assessment Report](#) as a resource for this objective.
- b. Ask entities to provide the number of individuals they serve from diverse and underserved communities.

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Objective 1.5: Monitor and determine advocacy needed regarding funding opportunities at the local, state and national levels for workforce development, scholarships, tuition support, etc.

- a. Track the Behavioral Health Community-Based Organized Networks of Equitable Care and Treatment (BH-CONNECT) Section 1115(a) Demonstration and provide feedback on the policy and implementation of the Workforce Initiative and optional Clubhouse services Benefit.
 - i. Track the number of individuals from diverse and underrepresented communities being served in BH-CONNECT workforce programs.

Objective 1.6: Support building the workforce of individuals with lived behavioral health experience through monitoring the success of statewide certification, training, and Medicaid reimbursement for Peer Support Specialists, Community Health Workers, and Wellness Coaches, including the promotion of equitable opportunities for career growth, at the state and local levels.

Objective 1.7: Determine need for advocacy and best course of action to promote the integration of non-credentialed, non-licensed behavioral health workers at the community level who do not operate at the level of Peer Support Specialists, Community Health Workers, or other certified and credentialed professions.

Objective 1.8: Build relationships and engage with educational institutions to support pipeline programs and advocate best practices defined by education experts be implemented across higher education to prepare individuals to work in the behavioral health field.

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Strategic Goal 2.0: Ensure through advocacy that any California mental health consumer who wants to work or be self-employed has minimal barriers and timely access to trauma-informed, person-centered, diverse, and recovery-oriented employment support services and pre-employment services across the lifespan to secure and retain a job or career of choice.

Objective 2.1: Monitor and advocate for successful employment programs available to mental health and substance use disorder consumers at the local level and advise the state to scale these programs to hard-to-reach, underserved communities and consider the limitations of these programs created by unequal access and opportunities due to systemic social inequities.

- a. Build Council's understanding of California Department of Rehabilitation's mechanism to support employment and education for California's mental health and substance use disorder consumers, including but not limited to mental health Cooperative Programs.

Objective 2.2: Build Council's understanding of employment services "best practices" and resources across the lifespan with due exploration of impact of social and racial inequities on such best practices, including but not limited to: Individual Placement & Support (IPS) Model of Supported Employment; Social Enterprises; Clubhouses, self-employment and gig work; supported education; high school pipeline and career development; Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) or other funding sources; and career pathways and advancement for consumers and peers.

- a. Host a listening session, workshop, or event inviting representatives for each employment model including entrepreneurs to provide perspectives of each model on the community needs, benefits and challenges.