





CYBHI
Children and Youth
Behavioral Health Initiative

CYBHI Legacy Report 2026

ADVANCING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH: FROM MOMENT TO MOVEMENT





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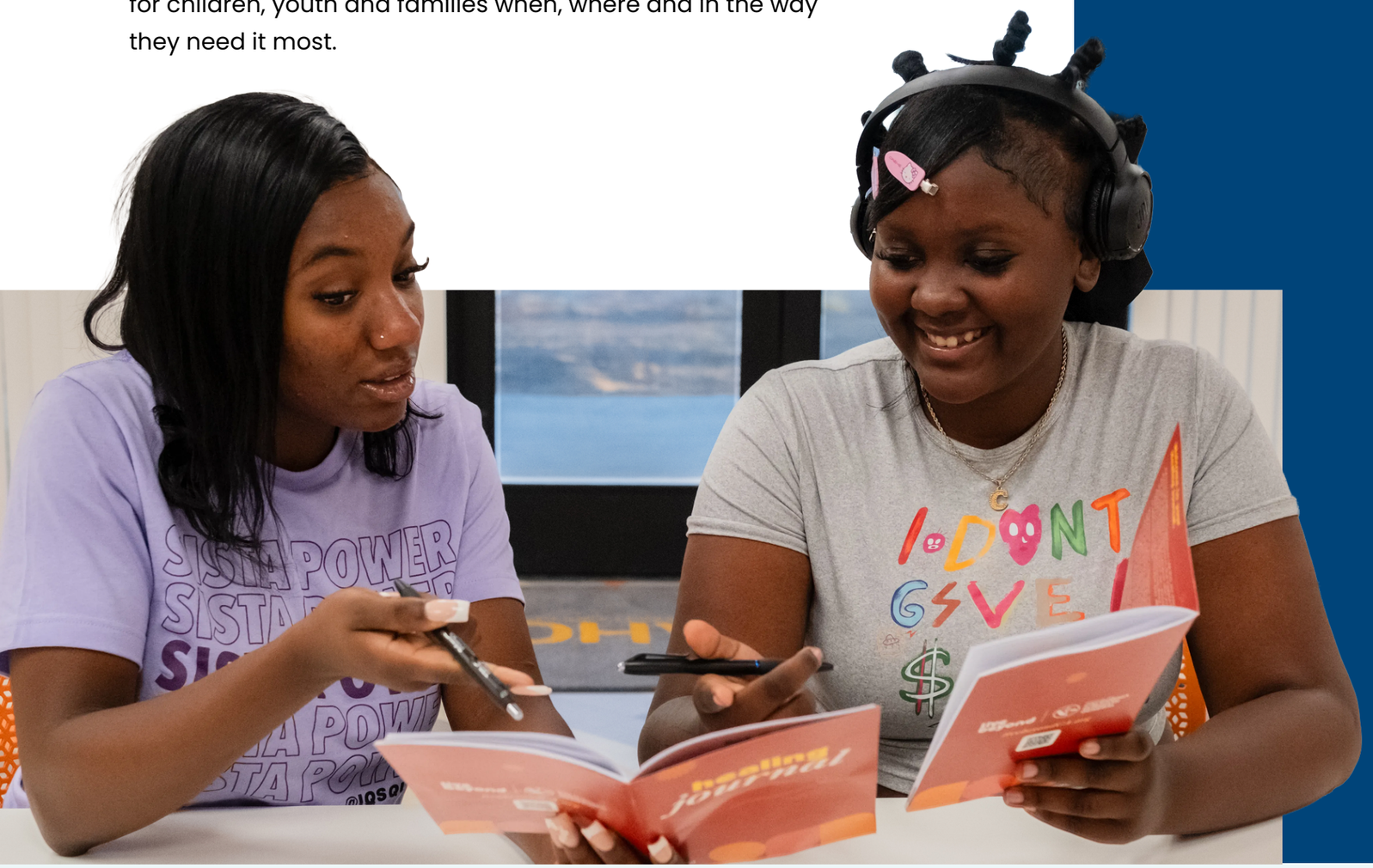
CYBHI is transforming behavioral health services and supports for children, youth and families when, where and in the way they need it most.



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FROM THE YOUTH OF CALIFORNIA

This year, we've witnessed what happens when young people are trusted to lead and when our voices are treated as essential, not optional. Through the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI), we've seen our ideas, stories and creativity shape campaigns, apps and programs that reflect what it truly means to be young in California today.

It's in the little moments that we feel the impact most. Seeing *Take Space to Pause* on the side of a bus. Spotting a *Never a Bother* billboard or seeing *Never a Bother* featured at Coachella. Catching a Soluna ad on TikTok or playing on the TV at a nail salon. Those moments remind us that youth voices aren't just being included; they're reaching people where they really are. They make us feel seen, represented and proud to be part of something that started from our lived experiences and grew into something so much bigger.

For many of us, CYBHI became a space to turn our challenges into purpose. We built campaigns like *Live Beyond*, *Never a Bother* and *Take Space to Pause* – which all included reminders that healing, rest and vulnerability belong to all of us. We helped create opportunities like the Youth Mental Health Academy and the Certified Wellness Coach profession, proving that when youth lead, innovation follows.

We also worked alongside youth in our communities, through local and community-based organizations across the state that are leading change on the ground every day. Through partnerships that ranged from youth advocates in small towns to organizers in large cities, CYBHI funding helped create spaces for young people to grow, lead and shape what mental health looks like in their own neighborhoods.

But we also know our work is far from done. Every day, young people — especially those from immigrant, undocumented, unhoused, foster, justice-involved, LGBTQ+, and other marginalized backgrounds — continue to face barriers to care, belonging, and safety. Our generation carries the weight of mental health stigma, systemic inequities, and social isolation. Yet we also carry the vision, resilience and determination to transform those realities.

This report isn't just a reflection of what CYBHI has accomplished; it's proof of what's possible when youth are given the space to lead. And as the youth of California, we want to make one thing clear: our leadership doesn't end here. We will keep building the future we want to see, one rooted in shared decision-making, empathy and accountability.

To every agency, school and movement reading this: keep creating space for young people not just to participate, but to lead. Because when you trust youth, you're investing in the future of California. And that future is already here.

With pride, purpose and hope.



Abraham, Age 19, Los Angeles
Allisson, Age 17, Los Angeles
Anastasia, Age 19, San Joaquin
Angela, Age 24, Monterey
Angelina, Age 20, Sacramento
Arlene, Age 17, Los Angeles
Calvin, Age 20, Lake
Carrie, Age 16, San Jose
Casper, Age 17, Sacramento
Chizu, Age 24, Napa
Darius, Age 23, San Francisco
Dianna, Age 21, Fresno
Diyansha, Age 21, Yolo
Duke, Age 20, San Diego
Gianna, Age 15, Sacramento
Hudson, Age 18, San Diego
Indigo, Age 26, Sacramento
Isabel, Age 19, Lake
Isabelle, Age 25, Sacramento
Jamie, Age 18, Los Angeles
Jayme, Age 20, Undisclosed
Jessica, Age 21, Yolo
Josie, Age 26, Solano
Karla, Age 22, Undisclosed
Katie, Age 22, Undisclosed
Kimberly, Age 17, Los Angeles
Mariah, Age 24, San Francisco
Maritza, Age 18, Sonoma
Merissa, Age 20, Sacramento
Natalia, Age 25, Marin
Nathan, Age 23, Los Angeles
Pax, Age 14, Napa
Ruchita, Age 21, Alameda
Sara, Age 21, Alameda
Selina, Age 20, Orange County
Sergio, Age 14, Sacramento
Setareh, Age 25, Alameda
Shailen, Age 24, Los Angeles
Sierra, Age 22, Alameda
Valeria, Age 17, Los Angleles
Xamara, Age 19, San Mateo

FROM CALIFORNIA'S GOVERNOR AND FIRST PARTNER

As parents of four, protecting the health and well-being of children is some of the most important work we do — and it's critical to California's success. And like so many others, we try to bring stability and security to our children's daily lives in a world that often feels uncertain. If California is to raise a generation of children who are healthy in mind, body, and spirit, we must ensure the world around them supports that well-being.

To everyone who has partnered with the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI), we thank you. Your work truly matters. Having adults in kids' lives who know how to listen, who are prepared to step in early, and who understand what support really looks like can change the course of a life. You are stepping up to provide the essential tools, connection and care that our children need.

CYBHI represents the largest state investment in youth behavioral health in modern history, and it is a key pillar of the more than $14 billion in behavioral health investments that California has made during our Administration.

Across the state, the initiative is making a difference for children, youth and families. Over 1,600 California organizations are conducting over 2,100 activities that advance behavioral health supports and services across the state. Young people are supporting each other through peer programs in schools and youth centers in their communities.

More than 65 organizations are supporting parents learn new skills to support their children's wellbeing. More than 4,700 care providers, including doctors and nurses, are receiving support to integrate behavioral health into routine visits. Schools are offering more services to their communities. More than 50 training programs are expanding capacity to graduate more care providers. And the list goes on. This work and its impact continue to grow.

The need remains urgent, and California will continue working to ensure every child can access the care and support they need. This is our collective legacy, and we are so proud that California is turning this vision into reality through this historic investment.

So, thank you again for everything you do each day to ensure that all young Californians have the best start in life and the chance to grow up healthy and whole.

Gavin Newsom
Governor of California

Jennifer Siebel Newsom
First Partner of California



FROM THE CALHHS SECRETARY & CYBHI DIRECTOR

Over the past several years, it has been inspiring to witness Californians rise up and turn a mental health moment into a mental health movement.

Through the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI) and Governor Newsom's Master Plan for Kids' Mental Health, young people and their parents, community partners, care providers, schools, and public servants all across California are working together to reimagine mental health and substance use services for children and youth.

And the transformation is well underway. Young Californians are accessing support designed to promote wellness, address substance use, and prevent crises; schools are increasingly becoming hubs of wellness and services; and community organizations are tackling stigma and delivering culturally anchored supports.

This report captures real progress worth celebrating. It reflects new pathways to care, innovative tools built with and for young people, expanded services, and a diversified workforce committed to meeting children, youth and families where they are. It tells the story of systems shifting to prioritize and center the needs of youth.

And while much has already been accomplished, we will keep working to build on and sustain our progress.

Many families are still navigating uncertainty. Young people are carrying more than they should have to — anxiety, grief, trauma, and the weight of a world that often feels unsteady. What gives us hope is knowing that no matter what we face, California's commitment to strengthening behavioral health supports for children, youth and families is unwavering. It is not only the right thing to do; it is essential to California's future.

Thank you to the youth guiding the way and to the parents, partners, providers, and public servants who made this progress possible and who continue to carry this work forward. Your efforts are forever changing the landscape across California's communities.

Together, we will continue strengthening the behavioral health system that our children, youth and families deserve.

Kim Johnson
Secretary,
California Health & Human Services Agency

Sohil R Sud, MD, MA
Director,
Children & Youth Behavioral Health Initiative



Photo Credit: Stefanie Boltz/CalHHS

CYBHI

BUILDING THE MOVEMENT

As of early Spring 2026, though totals continue to grow:

**Impressions are calculated as the total times content and messaging was displayed across a platform. May include duplicate views among individuals who have been exposed to campaign assets across multiple platforms.*

$2.2B+
awarded to 1.6K+ California organizations advancing efforts through 2K+ activities

4B+
impressions from public awareness campaigns

live beyond | TAKE SPACE TO PAUSE | Never a Bother

500K+
children, youth and families receiving support from digital platforms

BrightLife Kids — A CalHOPE program by Brightline | soluna | Mirror



230K+
school-linked services provided in 190+ school districts and colleges, financed by 40+ health plans through the CYBHI Fee Schedule Program

70K+
individuals supported along their behavioral health path, including 4K+ Certified Wellness Coaches and 10K+ Peer Support Specialists

CWC Certified Wellness Coach

4K+
providers receiving consultation and education from Cal-MAP

Cal-MAP

12K+
adults working with youth receiving training in trauma-informed practices

SAFE SPACES | OPEN DOORS

8.5K+
new treatment outpatient slots coming online at newly constructed health facilities

...AND GROWING!

CYBHI Legacy Report 2026

HOMES & COMMUNITIES

CYBHI
Children and Youth
Behavioral Health Initiative

HOMES & COMMUNITIES

Homes and communities are foundational in shaping the trajectory of our lives. Parents and caregivers are the first people to guide our development and show us the way. These early years matter immensely. As noted by First 5 California, "The first thousand days of a baby's life are likely to set the foundation for the physical and emotional health for the rest of their life. A child's brain is more than 80% developed by age 3."

What happens to us in our homes affects us in many ways, for better and, sometimes, for worse. Adversity experienced in childhood, particularly if intense and ongoing, can last throughout one's lifetime and raises the risks of mental and physical illness. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are stressful or potentially traumatic experiences that happen before the age of 18, like having a caregiver who struggled with mental health or substance use, witnessing domestic violence, or experiencing abuse or neglect. ACEs are common and might even be passed down from generation to generation. In contrast, positive childhood experiences (PCEs) — those everyday moments that help children feel loved, supported and safe — help protect children and youth against the harmful effects of ACEs and set the stage for healthier families and communities across generations.

Learn more about ACEs, PCEs and toxic stress →

Communities also play a significant role in our health. It is often said that our ZIP code is a better predictor of our life expectancy and health than our genetic code. The resources — or lack thereof — in our neighborhoods impact our lives in profound ways.

Addressing issues begins by centering children and youth and affirming their right to self-determination



Jeanine Gaines and Alton Pitre, at CYBHI's CYF Network Convening. Photo Credit: Hoops 4 Justice

— the ability to shape their own futures and define the solutions that impact their lives. California's youth must be positioned as leaders, not passive participants, driving transformative change.

Through CYBHI, California is supporting the actions of young people, families and communities to build resilience, because where we live and who supports us shape our well-being.

SUPPORT AT HOME

California is embracing the notion that parenting is something we grow into, and every step forward makes a difference. Through CYBHI, more parents and caregivers are accessing expert support so that no one has to navigate challenges alone.

Photo Credit: Joaquin Rojas

Parenting is a learned skill, and we can all get better at it.

For 26-year-old Dia Antazo of Mendocino County, parenting as a single father was isolating. “I think that was the hardest thing, just feeling that you’re the only one dealing with this. None of my friends have really experienced this, and I don’t really have any family that has [children]. So, it’s not something you really want to talk about.”

But that began to change when he started taking classes through the Positive Parenting Program, or Triple P. One of the most impactful classes he took was specifically designed for parents who are separated. It helped him recognize how his parents’ divorce continues to affect him and gave him tools to better support his daughter when she begins asking questions. “Me and her mom are not really together, and she’s so young that [I] can’t really explain, it doesn’t make any sense to her yet. But once she gets older, I feel like now I actually know how to deal with it and properly talk to her.”

Dia is just one of hundreds of parents supported through the expansion of caregiver supports in California. Through one of five rounds of CYBHI’s Evidence-Based Practices and Community-Defined

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Learn more about Dia’s story →



Mother and sons at a CYBHI community event. Photo Credit: Joaquin Rojas

Evidence Practices (EBP/CDEP) Grant Program, DHCS awarded $33 million to 67 organizations to scale parent and caregiver supports, including Triple P.

These grants are supercharging a growing network of parenting programs across the state — some rooted in cultural traditions, others backed by decades of research.

Listen: David Brody, Executive Director of First 5 Santa Cruz County, on how DHCS grants are supporting his team’s approach to delivering services →

From home-visiting models like the **Family Spirit Program**, which honors Indigenous traditions, to culturally centered efforts like the Promotora Peer Support Models, these initiatives are building trusted spaces where families feel seen, supported and equipped with real-life tools.

When it feels heavy, remember: we don’t have to get through things alone.

Sometimes we just need an expert in our corner. Someone who takes the time to get to know our family, our unique situation, and provide specific and accessible advice to get us through those tougher challenges.

For Sarah, that included getting the support she needed to overcome substance use as a new mother. At the perinatal residential treatment program at Janus of Santa Cruz, Sarah received support to live with her newborn baby and heal while learning healthy coping mechanisms, finding long-term housing, and enrolling in college. Through Round 4 of the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP) administered by DHCS, Janus of Santa Cruz was one of 52 projects funded to provide behavioral health treatment and services that serve children and youth age 25 and younger, including pregnant and postpartum individuals and their children and transition-age youth (ages 18-25) and their families.



A mural at Wheatland Union High School in Yuba County.



> I was homeless when I came here. I'm now housed. I'm now going to college. I just recently acquired a scholarship.

– SARAH, A PARENT WHO RECEIVED SERVICES AT JANUS SANTA CRUZ

Learn more about Sarah's story →

Photo Credit: Nick Dolph

Compassion and connection empower families.

Becoming a parent can feel overwhelming, especially when you're already navigating added challenges in your life. In San Diego County, a new parent* wanted to feel confident in caring for their baby but found the daily demands of parenthood daunting, particularly while managing their own health needs.

A public health nurse working with San Diego Health and Human Services Agency stepped in as a steady source of support. Using a program from Healthy Families America, this nurse regularly visited the parent in their home and answered questions about newborn care, including everything from safe sleep and breastfeeding to handling common concerns like thrush and vaccinations. Together, they worked through practical challenges and built a plan that felt manageable.

Beyond health guidance, the nurse connected the family to parenting classes, local resources for essentials and community activities that encouraged bonding and social connection. Over time, the parent shared that they felt more confident and capable; proof that consistent, compassionate support can make a world of difference for families navigating early parenthood.

These types of 'wraparound' services that connect families with development professionals are growing across California, allowing more parents to receive expert support when, where and in the way they need it most. The expansion of the Nurse-Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers, Healthy Families America, and similar programs is supported by $56 million in grant funding from DHCS, distributed across 54 organizations.

> "Also, digital community supports like BrightLife Kids and Soluna are being offered to anybody in our state, regardless of your language, regardless of your immigration status, regardless of your income, regardless of where you live … this is something you can access. [They have] been very beneficial to a lot of members of our community…"
>
> – ISAI GARNICA-PALMA, VALLEY ONWARD



Siblings playing at CYBHI community event.
Photo Credit: Joaquin Rojas

**All stories in this report are of real Californians. Some have been partially or fully anonymized at the request of individuals.*

Parents and caregivers are increasingly heading online for expert support.

Online platforms are becoming a go-to source for parenting advice. Isai Garnica-Palma of Valley Onward notes that convenience is a critical component underlying this trend, and that California's digital supports — through platforms like Soluna and BrightLife Kids — are breaking down barriers to accessing support for members of his Central California community.

Learn More about Isai Garnica-Palma's perspective on CYBHI digital supports →



Photo Credit: Live Beyond ACEs Campaign

Members of Garnica-Palma's community are among the hundreds of thousands of parents and caregivers receiving support though CYBHI digital platforms, over 50% of whom identify as persons of color.

Short video content has also emerged as a significant digital resource for parents, delivering expert guidance in an approachable format. In response, DHCS collaborated with the Child Mind Institute to develop Positive Parenting, Thriving Kids, a comprehensive series designed to equip families with practical strategies and evidence-based support. This bilingual (English/Spanish) series of free videos and print resources addresses the most common (and yet vexing) parenting challenges with practical, evidence-based, clinician-backed information and skills. The videos, each about seven minutes in length, explore these topics and more: building positive, healthy relationships; building healthy self-esteem; and parent/caregiver self-care. As of November 30, 2025, Californians have viewed the series more than 53,000 times, and the resource guides and videos have been downloaded more than 9,000 times.

Learn More: "How do I help my child cope with stress?" →

> "I'm respecting myself, I'm honoring myself, by prioritizing myself..."
>
> – PARENT DISCUSSING SELF-CARE, POSITIVE PARENTING THRIVING KIDS VIDEO



Positive Parenting, Thriving Kids Video
Photo Credit: Child Mind Institute

Movement break hosted by Hoops 4 Justice.
Credit: Alton Pitre / Hoops 4 Justice

Neighborhood-based care is critical to improving the lives of today's youth and young adults. CYBHI is supporting this approach through increasing community-based services and expanding a workforce that is embedded where young people live and supported by sustainable financing.

COMMUNITY IS HEALING

Community is care. Community is healing.

Since that's true, then community must also be where services and supports are delivered. Throughout California, community-based organizations (CBOs) are expanding services, training staff in behavioral health core principles, and engaging in new, sustainable billing practices. Together, these efforts expand community-based services and ensure they reflect the values, strengths and lived experiences of the people they serve.

Jasmin O'Neill of Humboldt County found support from Two Feathers Native American Family Services, an organization providing individual and family counseling, layered with cultural healing practices, drumming, and family circles. **Grant funding from DHCS** expanded Two Feathers' reach to serve more Native youth experiencing community and intergenerational trauma.

Bay Area-based Seneca Family Services is scaling its Mobile Response Team (MRT) to provide more rapid, community-based crisis intervention for youth in distress — meeting families in homes, schools or neighborhoods rather than waiting for hospital visits or law enforcement involvement. In 2024 alone, Seneca's MRT helped 80% of youth who received crisis response services **avoid hospitalization**.

Organizations like Two Feathers and Seneca Family Services are among the 291 organizations awarded through DHCS grants to scale trauma-informed practices and early intervention services. In total, over $165 million was allocated across California in two grant rounds. These investments are not just funding programs — they are fueling a movement to bring behavioral healthcare into the heart of communities.

132
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS FUNDED

$117M
TO SUPPORT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKERS

Transforming outcomes also requires a behavioral health workforce that is community-based, culturally responsive and positioned where young people live, learn and lead.

With support from CYBHI, youth-serving organizations are scaling up their ability to do just this.

In Northern California, Alternative Family Services, which provides foster care, adoption and mental health services was one of 132 organizations that received **CBO workforce grants** totaling $117 million from the California Department of Healthcare Access and Information (HCAI). At a time when incentives often drive behavioral health workers into private-pay care models, Alternative Family Services leveraged this funding to provide recruitment and retention bonuses and loan-repayments to their staff, all of whom subsequently remained with the organization.

Fresno-based Exceptional Parents Unlimited leveraged these resources to provide a stipend to a long-term employee entering graduate school while employed full time at the agency.

These types of activities illustrate how workforce investments support staffing stability, having a direct impact on the communities they serve.



Dr. Ramos meets with 1st graders at Clovis Global Academy during her Safe Spaces school tour.

> When I think about Two Feathers, I think of a big family that is very open-minded and very big on mental health… I think being part of Two Feathers has made a difference. It's given me something to put my mind around when things in my life didn't make sense.
>
> – JASMIN O'NEILL



Youth Change Makers of Generation Indigenous
Photo Credit: Indian Health Council

Building positive, trauma-informed relationships with youth is essential to creating safe and supportive environments where healing and growth can occur.

Training program staff who do not have a formal behavioral health role is just as important as ensuring access to specialists. Ensuring that the first line of individuals is ready to meet youth with understanding about the impact of trauma helps them to respond with empathy, consistency and care. This approach prioritizes trust, respect, and resilience, ensuring that every interaction reinforces a sense of belonging and emotional safety.

Through a partnership with the California Alliance of Child and Family Services' Catalyst Center, California launched **Open Doors**, a no-cost training program that equips anyone working with youth with skills to engage young people around substance use and other behavioral health concerns. Through Open Doors, California is affirming the value of relationships as the foundation for well-being.

As of February 2026, more than 700 individuals have completed the training — which has both online and in-person components — and 2026 is on track to be a year of significant growth. To meet increasing demand, California is standing up a train-the-trainer program accessible to individuals throughout the state.

> "Our staff appreciated the interactive approach, which combined both fun and learning. Many expressed that they now feel confident in applying what they learned to their daily work and home life and are grateful for the opportunity to participate. The materials provided were incredibly helpful, and we're looking forward to the continued training sessions and ongoing support."
>
> – KELLY DOOLEY, BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS, ON PARTICIPATING IN OPEN DOORS TRAINING



Open Doors Facilitators Kat Besse and Francisco Valverde with Saddleback College team.

Sustainable community-based services need to be integrated into the broader healthcare financing system.

CYBHI is supporting and training CBOs — many of which have historically operated outside of the formal healthcare system — to become billing-ready. This includes helping them navigate complex regulatory requirements, build administrative infrastructure, and align their services with Medi-Cal standards for documentation, credentialing and reimbursement.

The **Justice Serving Network** (JSN) is an effort designed to strengthen the capacity of community organizations serving young people impacted by criminal legal systems. Jointly funded by the Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR) and DHCS through CYBHI for a total of $13.5 million over three years, JSN leverages the opportunities created by Medi-Cal and CalAIM reforms, which allow CBOs that work with youth — 90% of whom are Medi-Cal eligible — to access new and sustainable revenue streams.

The importance of these services to youth who are at risk of involvement or are involved in the justice system is nationally recognized. More than 65% of youth, including two-thirds of boys and three-quarters of girls, who are arrested every year have mental health conditions. Often, these needs have gone untreated or misdiagnosed, leading to engagement with the juvenile justice system.

> "We are individuals with lived experience, and that lived experience has to do with the criminality aspect of our lives. Individuals like myself who are creating a way and becoming professional entities, it's great to be given kudos that you're doing the right thing. It's energizing. When we are struggling, we know that it's okay to struggle."
>
> – YOUTH INVOLVED WITH THE JUSTICE SERVING NETWORK

In 2024, the first JSN cohort was selected, composed of 10 organizations across California. Selected organizations received $450,000 over the course of two years as well as peer-to-peer network building and tailored technical assistance to support Medi-Cal navigation and billing. Through these supports, JSN helps smaller, community-rooted organizations to secure Medi-Cal funding. The ultimate goal of the JSN is to improve outcomes for youth impacted by criminal legal systems and to secure the long-term sustainability for the organizations that support them.

Integrating community-based care into the healthcare financing system is a critical step toward building a more equitable and enduring behavioral health ecosystem.

"Supporting all aspects of restorative services for youth, including behavioral health, is important in moving youth justice toward healing and achieving better outcomes as youth transition to adulthood," said Katherine Lucero, Director of California's Office of Youth and Community Restoration. "This partnership means that more of these services reach youth and their families who need them, allowing them to be supported by behavioral health professionals who understand their circumstances in profound ways."

Read More about the Justice Serving Network →

Native Youth at CYBHI's CYF Network Convening.
Photo Credit: Alton Pitre / Hoops 4 Justice

Youth leadership is not a strategy — it is a necessary ingredient for meaningful, lasting change.

YOUTH AT THE CENTER

Life for youth today is different — and more complex than ever.

They are navigating a world shaped by rapid technological change, social pressures, climate-driven disasters and evolving definitions of identity and community. These challenges are impacting mental health and well-being in profound ways that previous generations were never forced to confront or fully grasp.

But with challenge comes insight. Those closest to the problem — young people themselves — are best positioned to lead the way forward. They bring lived experience, creativity and a deep understanding of what works and what doesn't. When we adults listen, step back and create space for youth leadership, they rise to the occasion.

To better understand the insights of young people, CYBHI, with support from The Social Changery, established a statewide network of youth-serving organizations, known as the Children, Youth, and Family Network (CYFN). Spanning urban, rural and tribal communities across California, the Network brought together more than 20 organizations to serve as trusted messengers, thought partners and community anchors and inform the design, implementation and continuous improvement of CYBHI. This ensures that youth voices are not only heard, but drive the transformation of California's behavioral health system.

> "Being part of the CYFN has affirmed that statewide change is most effective when youth and community partners are involved in every stage. CYBHI has shown true collaboration through their commitment to lived experience, youth leadership, and community-centered initiatives. By emphasizing healing, accountability and culturally responsive mental health support, they have created a space where youth feel acknowledged and empowered."
>
> – TYLER ALCÉ , PROGRAM DIRECTOR, BLACK STUDENTS OF CALIFORNIA UNITED





Members of Black of Students California United, who engaged with CYBHI as part of the CYF Network.

Khoa-Nathan Ngo (second from right) stands alongside fellow youth panelists at CYBHI's CYF Network Convening. Photo Credit: Alton Pitre / Hoops 4 Justice

"As a CYBHI youth fellow, I've seen how powerful it is when young people are embraced as partners and not just treated like afterthoughts. Youth engagement strengthens our behavioral health system by grounding it in our lived experience and helping create supports that we need and feel like they were made for us."

– KHOA-NATHAN NGO, CYBHI YOUTH FELLOW



Having a space to just be themselves can make all the difference to youth who are struggling.

Through over $50 million in funding from DHCS, 69 organizations are scaling youth-driven programs, ensuring that young people are not only at the table, but shaping the agenda, driving solutions and creating spaces for a more responsive and equitable behavioral health system.

Mia is one of those youth transforming her community. Due to the advocacy and leadership of her and her peers, and with support from many partners, a new allcove™ center is now open in her south Orange County community.

Developed by Stanford University in partnership with the Commission for Behavioral Health, **allcove**™ offers youth ages 12 to 25 years a safe and supportive space and access to a broad range of potential services, including mental health, physical health, substance use disorder, peer support, family support, housing, supported education and employment, and linkage to other services.

"It's a place that anyone can come to — it's a welcoming space — I think people can feel safe there." – Mia, Member of allcove™ San Juan Capistrano's Youth Advisory Group.

Read More about allcove™ San Juan Capistrano →

Each allcove™ is uniquely designed with input directly from young people in local communities. The center in San Juan Capistrano and the center in Marysville, both supported with CYBHI funding, look and feel distinctly different.

"The needs of Marysville youth are very different than youth from, let's say Sacramento. We're really taking their voices. We're not taking a cookie cutter center and placing it there. For example, one of the things that the youth told us is that they wanted more hands-on experience in barbering. Thanks to one of our partners, we're creating a pop-up barbering center where the youth can get that kind of experience." - Erica Gray, Yuba County Office of Education

Bay Area-based LYRIC, one of the country's oldest lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQQ+) organizations, provides much needed support with a team that reflects the community they serve. Through grant funding from DHCS, LYRIC expanded their LGBTQQ+ Youth Drop-in Center.

"Opportunities for youth to connect with peers in a safe space are vital. When they go out into the larger community, they need to know they're not alone in a world that often refuses to let them be themselves. One of our most successful groups is our Dungeons & Dragons group, a space to have fun and take a break from the stress of constantly navigating who they can and cannot be in the outside world."

– MARIO (MAR) BALCITA (THEY/THEM), VICE PRESIDENT OF PEOPLE AND PROGRAMS, LYRIC

Watch: Erica Gray describes how the allcove™ center in Marysville will be unique to serving the community's youth →

Many youth shaping these programs and services are tapping into their own talents and expertise and healing themselves as they help heal others.

Nathan Lomayesva (Cherokee/Navajo/Hopi/Shawnee/Creek) is a designer who helped adapt and refine materials from the Office of the California Surgeon General's *Live Beyond* ACEs and Toxic Stress Campaign in order to bring it to life for Native and Tribal communities throughout California.

"One of my favorites is the sticker with beadwork. That design is inspired from jewelry that my mom and I owned as well as a picture frame from my grandma that was beaded around the edge. Beadwork is so integral to Native design in general, so it was important to have that aspect represented in my work."

CYBHI partner organization Youth Creating Change is fostering creativity and youth-centered suicide prevention efforts. Through film contests, art competitions, and related trainings and educational campaigns, the organization promotes help-seeking behaviors designed for youth, by youth.

Between September 2024 and May 2025, 269 youth from across the state participated in these contests and submitted 525 pieces of art to support mental health, promote suicide awareness and remind each other they are Never a Bother.

The *Live Beyond* campaign debuted at the Youth Creating Change's 2024 Film Festival. To advance Governor Newsom's **Executive Order** to reconnect men and boys with more support, the organization launched a media challenge entitled "Through the Lens of Boys, Young Men, and Those Who Care About Them." Winners were announced at the Annual Film Contest in Los Angeles in May 2026.

> "Art is a powerful medium for anyone — specifically young men — to explain what they are going through and find answers in the creative process."
>
> – SHAILEN DAWKINS, ADVISOR, *NEVER A BOTHER* YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION CAMPAIGN

Native stickers designed by Nathan Lomayesva for the Live Beyond Campaign.



Through stories and expressions, young people spark conversations and bridge generations.

Built on the belief that youth should lead the conversation on mental health, the California Department of Public Health established a Youth Co-Lab. Co-Lab members are youth whose voices, ideas and lived experiences are at the core of *Take Space to Pause*, a campaign focused on public education (see *Changing Conversations* for more detail). Compensated for their time and knowledge, the group of 16 youth help design creative advertisements and share collective perspectives at meetings, conferences and public events. They also help amplify campaign messages in communities across California.

Through the Youth Co-Lab, young people are challenging outdated social norms, setting the agenda, and inspiring a culture where mental health is prioritized.

California is demonstrating that well-being is not strictly clinical — it is a shared responsibility across all parts of society, including homes and communities.

Through CYBHI, the state is embedding support in the everyday environments of young people and collectively reimaging prevention and early intervention.

Paired with workforce development strategies and sustainability pathways, CYBHI is building a future where youth lead the way and care is delivered by individuals who understand the unique challenges experienced within any given community, because they come from that very community.

This approach builds trust, reduces stigma, and makes it easier for young people and families to seek help early — before challenges escalate.



"Being part of the [Youth Co-Lab] excites me because I believe honest, open conversations about mental health can break down the stigma and open doors to real support. I want to help amplify youth voices, encourage understanding and compassion for those who've experienced trauma, and push for change in how our communities understand and address mental and physical health."

– SETAREH HARSAMIZADEH TEHRANI, YOUTH CO-LAB
(MEET OTHER YOUTH CO-LAB MEMBERS)

Setareh Harsamizadeh Tehrani at Santa Clara University
Credit: Nima Harsamizadeh Tehrani

HOMES & COMMUNITIES *AT A GLANCE*

Scaling Community Services

increasing services, growing the local workforce and supporting on-ramps to sustainable funding

Centering Youth

promoting agency and fostering self-determination in program design and implementation

Supporting Parents & Caregivers

strengthening skills and supports and facilitating connections with expert guidance in person and online



California is showing that well-being grows from everyday life with support that begins in homes and extends throughout local communities.

"Having grown up in this area… I know what our needs are, and I know what our strengths are. **Our [community] is so resilient**. But the thing about resiliency is that you want to create the conditions where you don't have to be resilient anymore."

– NOHEMÍ ARROYO-MAGAÑA, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, LINDHURST HIGH SCHOOL

CYBHI Legacy Report 2026

EDUCATION SETTINGS

CYBHI
Children and Youth
Behavioral Health Initiative

EDUCATION SETTINGS

Children spend more time in school than any other activity except sleep, and because classrooms and campuses are where students spend their waking hours, they are ideal settings to foster resilience and deliver care.

California has invested in student well-being for decades. The Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), approved by voters in 2004, expanded funding for prevention, early intervention and community-based mental healthcare. Building on that foundation, the Mental Health Student Services Act (MHSSA) created grant programs to strengthen school-based partnerships and help more students access counseling, crisis response and family supports on campus. These efforts have been reinforced, updated and complemented by additional funding streams and reimbursement mechanisms. This includes pandemic-era mental health supports and conversion of the MHSA to the Behavioral Health Services Act. Efforts are also aligned with frameworks like Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to create safe, inclusive environments that promote both well-being and academic success.

Through CYBHI, California has been accelerating progress to advance student wellness. **The initiative represents one of the largest state investments in modern history, totaling more than $1.3 billion in direct school-linked investments alone.** The effort centers schools as hubs of wellness and settings to deliver accessible and high-quality behavioral healthcare.



Aleia Lund, Wheatland Union High's Director of Community Schools, speaks with a student.

$1.3 BILLION+

IN DIRECT SCHOOL-LINKED INVESTMENTS, REPRESENTS ONE OF THE LARGEST STATE INVESTMENTS IN MODERN HISTORY

WELLNESS IN THE CLASSROOM

Where do young people learn to thrive?
In a world increasingly defined by uncertainty and rapid change, students need skills to navigate life's challenges with confidence, empathy and resilience. These skills are not intangible traits left to chance — they are essential, teachable, attainable and measurable.

California Surgeon General Dr. Diana Ramos meets with Sonoma Valley High School's Youth Wellness Group.

Social and emotional learning

Through CYBHI, schools are strengthening educational frameworks that cultivate resilience, particularly through Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). Through SEL, students develop knowledge and skills to manage emotions, achieve positive goals, show empathy, establish healthy relationships and make caring decisions. These competencies are essential for academic achievement, mental wellness, workforce readiness and civic engagement. When developed in a sequenced, active, focused and explicit manner, SEL competencies have been shown to improve academic and health outcomes. California has invested $110 million to implement SEL-related programming, develop curricula and support staff training, as described further in the following sections.



Visual guides, emotion charts, and calming books help students in Tehama County's Calming Corners.

Learn more about CYBHI efforts to sow the seeds of SEL statewide →

Professional learning for educators

Educators play a critical role in shaping student well-being and should be supported in strengthening and expanding SEL. DHCS, in collaboration with the Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE) and the University of California, Berkeley, created a 12-week course to equip school staff with foundational SEL tools that support their students. From 2023 to 2025, more than 2,100 teachers and support staff, including counselors and Expanded Learning team members — across 55 counties and 507 districts statewide — engaged with this coursework.

Greater Good Science Center

Additionally, UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center established an SEL "mini-course" to provide educators with additional opportunities to receive a deeper understanding of resilience, trauma and adversity, safety and belonging, equity and cultural responsiveness, and more. Through June 2025,

97%

OF PARTICIPANTS DEEPENED THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF TOPICS

98%

REPORTED THE CONTENT WAS CULTURALLY RELEVANT TO THEIR COMMUNITY

the Basics of SEL Mini-Course and its companion SEL practice modules — still available through UC Berkeley — were accessed by more than 4,440 individuals. Ninety-seven percent of participants reported that module contents deepened their understanding of topics like mindfulness, awe and gratitude to a "moderate or extreme degree," and 98% reported that the content was "moderate or extremely" culturally relevant to their community.

Practicing with a community

Effective SEL implementation requires educators to actively integrate SEL principles into classroom instruction. SCOE convened monthly communities of practice (CoPs) with leaders from all 58 County Offices of Education to support this goal. County leaders in turn facilitated regional CoPs to support

local districts and schools. Specialized CoPs were also established to support Expanded Learning educators school mental health professionals, parent educators, and classified support staff who often have less access to such spaces. Individuals from all 58 counties participated in more than 1,920 CoPs statewide and regionally.

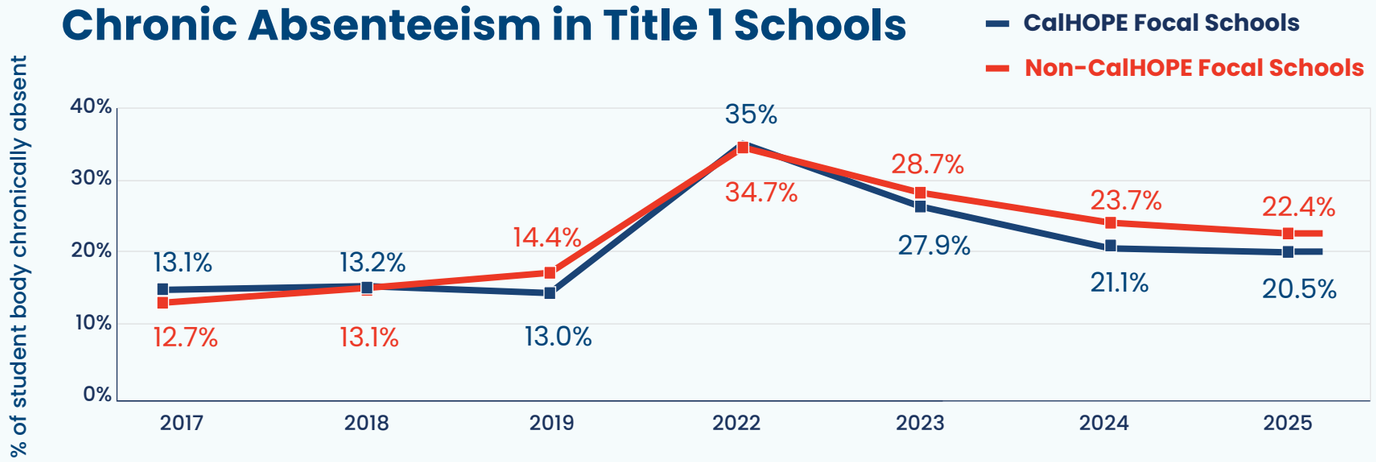
"I think post-COVID, there was a lot of new awareness that our teachers and students both needed more explicit tools to navigate stress," said Salina Mae Espinosa, advisor for the Greater Good Science Center and one of the lead facilitators of the online CoPs. "I felt really excited to get to teach adults social-emotional learning so that they can show up as their best selves at work."

SEL champions also gathered at an annual statewide CalHOPE SEL and Wellness Summit

Learn more about Salina's efforts →

supported through CYBHI. More than 1,500 educators, representing school leaders, mental health professionals, community partners and others came together to share trauma-informed SEL practices, student input in wellness planning, and equity in behavioral health access. Post-event surveys indicated that educators from 55 California counties attended, with 97% of participants responding that the summit themes of equity, transformation and integration were successfully expressed throughout the entire summit.

CalHOPE SEL Focal Schools



Title 1 Schools = schools with not less than 40% of students from low-income families.
CalHOPE Focal Schools = schools serving as hubs for social and emotional learning.

Since 2022, intensive efforts to expand SEL frameworks have transformed 350+ CalHOPE Focal Schools across 56 counties into hubs for social and emotional innovation. Reductions in chronic absenteeism — a known benefit of SEL — were observed at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Notably, Title I Focal Schools (i.e., schools with not less than 40% of students from low-income families) achieved absenteeism reductions at even higher rates than non-Focal schools.

Learn more about SEL and reducing chronic absenteeism →

SEL FRAMEWORKS WERE EXPANDED ACROSS

56 COUNTIES

AT OVER

350

CALHOPE FOCAL SCHOOLS

Teaching supports

To complement formal coursework for educators and CoPs, DHCS partnered with award-winning filmmakers and educators to produce practical tools for educators to use immediately. These tools, available through **CalHOPE Schools**, promoted SEL principles and included: *Animated Shorts* (available in English and Spanish) focused on teaching young learners to ask for help; *A Trusted Space*, a docu-training series focused on the social and neurobiological mechanisms of emotional stressors and disengagement that young people navigate; and *Stories of Hope*, a film series where real people share their mental health journeys with honesty and courage.

Designed to spark conversation, reduce stigma and inspire action, the three tools are accompanied by discussion guides. Collectively, resources from these digital programs have been viewed 79,900 times from August 2022 through June 2025 and they are available to continue to engage educators and students statewide.

"My academic challenges started to get more noticeable when I went to middle school, since [I had] a lot more reading assignments, different classes, trying to read … I would notice that my anxiety rates would go up … Talking about my emotions really helped me comprehend them. And it also allowed my family to understand what I was going through, since everything was so in my head … My family gives me hope, my friends give me hope, my community gives me hope, but also, I try to give myself hope."

– SHRUTI, FROM *STORIES OF HOPE*



Learn more about Shruti's story from *Stories of Hope* →



Photo Credit: CalHOPE.org



Photo Credit: CalHOPE.org

SUPPORTIVE CAMPUS CULTURES

The data are clear: young people's behavioral health and academic achievement are linked. Children and youth who **feel like they belong** in school attend school more often and tend to do better in the classroom and in life.

Youth at the CYBHI's CYF Network Convening walk outside for a movement break. Photo Credit: Hoops 4 Justice

Changing campus culture

Fostering behavioral health and well-being is essential for student success. Schools are more than places of learning. They are communities that shape social and emotional development. When resilience becomes part of school culture, students feel safe, supported and empowered to seek help without stigma. This shift requires intentional practices, including building inclusive spaces, exploring and scaling peer models, training staff in trauma-informed approaches, and supporting staff wellness.

Building inclusive spaces

California schools are recognizing that mental health support requires intentional physical spaces where students feel safe, welcomed and understood. With funding from DHCS through the Student Behavioral Health Incentive Program (SBHIP) and Mindfulness, Well-being, and Resilience (MWR) Supports, districts are investing in wellness centers designed to normalize help-seeking behaviors. These spaces provide a calm, inclusive environment where students might access counseling, participate in mindfulness activities and connect with peers, reinforcing the message that emotional well-being is a priority within the school community.

Funding from these programs has allowed schools across the state to create or enhance more than 280 wellness centers or spaces — each with resources to help students calm their mind and seek adult or peer support.



Yuba County Superintendent poses with other staff at Lindhurst High School's Blazer Support Center.

"In some instances, it's more than a corner — it's a room. A safe room with sensory objects and other tools that help students de-escalate big emotions," explains Kevin Gallagher, principal at Evergreen Elementary School.

Exploring and scaling peer models

Peer support plays an important role in promoting well-being. When youth connect with peers with similar experiences, they gain validation, encouragement, and practical coping strategies that professionals alone may not provide.

As Eshika, a high school student and youth mental health advocate, explains: "Peer to peer programs are crucial for students because support is most effective when it comes from someone who's experienced something similar and understands, even if just a little bit more, what you're feeling."

Across eight high schools in California, CYBHI is supporting students to take on leadership roles and transform campus culture through peer-to-peer programs, administered through DHCS in collaboration with The Children's Partnership.



Students in Bend, California show California Surgeon General Dr. Ramos their classroom calming corner.

Sierra High School in San Bernardino leveraged the opportunity to introduce the Sunshine Crew Wellness Ambassador Program. The initiative focuses on peer leadership, substance use prevention and mental health awareness. Leaders at this continuation school created dedicated wellness spaces and partnered with local organizations to address student needs through peer-driven engagement. What began as a small group of wellness ambassadors has now grown into a structured program with approximately 40 active members and a developing peer-counseling program.

"This student-led program gave me the confidence to speak up, lead and support others," reflected one member of the Sunshine Crew. "I didn't think I'd graduate. Now, I lead school tours and tell my story to others."



Youth gather to connect and support each other at the CYBHI's CYF Convening.
Credit: Hoops 4 Justice

Learn more about the Sunshine Crew and other peer-to-peer programs →

This peer-to-peer pilot continues through fall 2027. All eight programs are actively working to deepen fidelity, expand student leadership roles and increase sustainably by identifying best practices that can be implemented statewide.

Training staff in trauma-informed approaches

One of the drivers of culture change is mindset change. Across California, thousands of professionals working in schools, early learning and care settings, and other child-serving fields have embraced this notion by seeking training in trauma-responsive practices. Through **Safe Spaces**, a course created by experts working with the Office of the California Surgeon General and now overseen by the California Department of Public Health, more than 12,000 individuals from 57 counties have learned the skills needed to create conditions where young people feel understood, supported and secure.

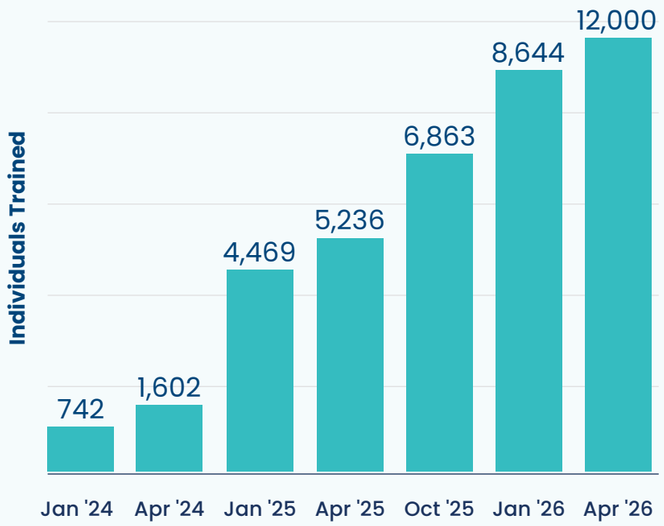


From Left to Right: Former Sonoma Unified School District Superintendent Jeanette Rodriguez Chien, California Surgeon General Dr. Ramos and community liaison for Altimira Middle School meet to discuss the Safe Spaces training.

Available in English and Spanish, Safe Spaces focuses on relational practices that promote psychological safety and belonging. The free, two-hour, self-paced online course offers tailored versions for those working with children and youth ages 0 to 5, 6 to 11, and 12 to 18.

Participants learn about the biology of stress and how to respond to signs of trauma in children and youth using accessible language and practical examples. Participants are introduced to key concepts and skills, including **Dr. Bruce Perry's** Regulate, Relate, Reason approach for addressing behavior concerns in real time. These strategies

Getting trained in Safe Spaces



help adults buffer the effects of toxic stress and create safe, stable and nurturing environments — critical for long-term positive outcomes.

Initially developed as a digital offering, CDPH is bringing in-person trainings to schools statewide through a train-the-trainer model, in partnership with experts at the UCSF-UCLA ACEs Aware Family Resilience Network (UCAAN). This approach will enable teams to deliver in-person, hybrid or virtual trainings tailored to community needs. To date, over 30 individuals from State agencies, LEAs, and CBOs have become certified to provide live Safe Spaces trainings.



Assistant Superintendent Julianne Reynoso, Ed.D., (left), with colleagues from Pasadena USD at Launch into Wellness.

Additionally, to align with new behavioral health training requirements for educators — i.e., California Education Code Section 49428.2(c) — CDPH and UCAAN launched **Recognize, Respond, Connect: Supporting the Behavioral Health of Our Students**. This free, self-paced, 50-minute online course equips school staff — trusted adults in students' lives — with strategies to create safe, inclusive learning environments that support social, emotional and physical well-being. The training also connects participants to a broader community of resources and professional development opportunities. Within months of launch, more than 600 staff members completed the course.

"This training provided much-needed information in an engaging format. I am grateful that in California, we are being proactive in the well-being of youth and those in service to them." – Course Participant of *Recognize, Respond, Connect.*

"On August 14, 2025, Pasadena USD hosted its first-ever "Launch into Wellness" event. Just seven months after the Eaton Fire, we recognized the urgent need to support the well-being of all 1,900 employees. The day featured a live training of Safe Spaces supported by our partners at CDPH and UCLA, along with workshops on creating safe spaces, mindfulness practices, trauma-responsive care, restorative and community circles, arts and crafts, and yoga. Each staff member also received a complimentary shirt bearing our theme: "The Power of US: Rising Together." The response was overwhelmingly positive, with feedback confirming we had achieved our goal. Building on this momentum, we've since created an accessible 10-month wellness plan. This healing process is essential to meeting the needs of everyone in our community, especially our students."

– JULIANNE REYNOSO, ED.D.,
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT, STUDENT WELLNESS AND SUPPORT SERVICES,
PASADENA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Supporting staff well-being

Educator wellness is essential to student success. In partnership with the Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE), DHCS distributed $65 million among California's 58 counties to promote local wellness, mindfulness, resilience and well-being programs that support teachers and students in TK–12 schools. These resources included support to implement SCOE's Schools as Centers of Wellness (SCOW) model, such as role-specific training resources, collective Impact strategies, and Coordination of Services Teams (COST) processes. These resources attracted 17,518 site visitors to the Transforming Schools into Centers of Wellness website.

Funding also supported two convenings during the 2024-25 school year, bringing together 50 participants from across 32 counties, districts and schools. Participants heard firsthand from school-based Mental Health and Wellness program staff about COST implementation, confidentiality practices, and visited school sites to see the SCOW model in action.



Staff from SCOE attend the Inaugural SEL & Wellness Summit.
Photo Credit: Sacramento Office of Education

By reimagining schools as hubs of behavioral healthcare and supports, California is building a system that **gives every child access to support, resilience and opportunity.**

BRINGING CARE TO CAMPUS

Students at Wheatland Union High School walk on campus.

The importance of scaling school-linked healthcare

Despite growing recognition of the importance of behavioral health, fragmented service delivery, workforce shortages, and limited funding have historically hindered efforts to fully support young people. These gaps disproportionately impact vulnerable populations, contributing to inequities in health and educational outcomes.

Schools are uniquely positioned to serve as hubs of behavioral healthcare and supports. They are accessible, trusted environments where children spend much of their time, allowing for early identification and intervention. By integrating services into the school setting, educators and behavioral health professionals can work together to provide support that reaches students where they learn and grow.

"I have a student who needs additional support because of social, emotional, and behavioral functioning challenges … As a parent who works full time with staff who work full time, it's really hard for us to access any sort of behavioral mental health services outside of the school day. Our kids are at school, they're there all day, and it's another way for our kids to get what they need." - **Lexi Hagedorn** of San Luis Obispo County.

School-linked care is evidence-based. A study of 17 school-based health centers (SBHC) in a large Southern California school district found that students receiving mental healthcare through SBHCs showed improved attendance and academic outcomes:

"We found that [students with a mental health diagnosis who used a SBHC] exhibited both a more steeply declining attendance trajectory prior to visiting the SBHC and a more positive attendance trajectory following a first SBHC mental health visit. These findings suggest that students with a mental health need may represent a group for whom SBHCs are particularly effective for improving academic outcomes. Previous research has also demonstrated that SBHC utilization for students with mental health needs resulted in improvements in grade point averages." – Caryssa Lim, MPH, et al.

Learn more about research underpinning CYBHI approaches →

Bridging healthcare and education

Education officials in Solano County were confronted with a troubling trend: schools were struggling to meet rising student behavioral health needs, and rates of exclusionary discipline did not align with best practices. Many of the affected students were enrolled in Medi-Cal, yet access to



Positive affirmations spread throughout Lindhurst High School's Blazer Support Center.

early identification, prevention and on-campus supports remained uneven.

Against that backdrop, Partnership HealthPlan of California — Solano County's Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan — stepped forward, providing targeted resources to schools with support from the Student Behavioral Health Incentive Program (SBHIP).

Through SBHIP, Partnership HealthPlan of California began working with school officials to address these gaps. The partnership built durable, school-centered behavioral health infrastructure designed to expand screenings, strengthen referral pathways and grow the workforce needed to deliver tiered supports.

County leaders believe the investments improved schools' ability to recognize concerns earlier, respond more effectively, and ensure students could connect to appropriate services on or near campus. SBHIP funding also helped establish countywide collaboration among the managed care plan, county behavioral health officials and school districts — laying the groundwork for sustainable, coordinated systems moving forward.

Early results are already emerging. In Dixon Unified School District, the expansion of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to all six schools contributed to a rise in Tier 1 fidelity scores from 27% to 62%. Multiple schools received statewide recognition for their work, and districtwide suspensions fell nearly 10%, dropping from 6.3% to 5.7%.

Vallejo City Unified School District reported similar gains. Average PBIS fidelity improved to 71% at Tier 1 and 92% at Tier 2, while suspensions declined 10% from 6.5% to 5.8%.

County officials say these outcomes underscore the potential of coordinated, evidence-based behavioral-health strategies — especially when embedded directly in schools — and suggest that continued investment could help sustain the momentum.

These types of school-linked care systems, coordinated strategies, new partnerships, and innovative, sustainable funding models are beginning to take root across the state.

Through SBHIP, Medi-Cal managed care plans collaborated with California's school districts to implement one of 14 targeted interventions over a three-year period. With support from DHCS, $389 million in incentive payments funded 147 interventions across all 58 counties.

In total, 22 Medi-Cal managed care plans and approximately 300 Local Educational Agencies (LEA) participated in SBHIP to expand access to preventive, early intervention and other behavioral health services for TK–12 students on Medi-Cal. The program is **estimated to impact more than 1.3 million** school-aged children.

Complementing these system-level improvements, SBHIP-supported behavioral health screenings identified students who otherwise may not have accessed care, resulting in more than one-quarter of screened students being referred for mental health services, exceeding program targets, with direct referrals to county Medi-Cal specialty mental health services. Collectively, these outcomes demonstrate SBHIP's impact in strengthening school environments, improving student well-being and preparing schools and managed care plans for long-term sustainability through CYBHI-aligned models and implementation of the CYBHI Fee Schedule program.

Through SBHIP, targeted interventions supported over **1.3M students, including over 800,000 school-aged Medi-Cal beneficiaries**. Additional notable successes include:

190,000+ STUDENTS	*received Behavioral Health Services*
8,600+ STAFF	*participated in culturally and linguistically responsive training*
5,700+ PARENTS	*and/or families participated in Behavioral Health Programming*
1,800+ INCREASE	*in Behavioral Health-related staff and/or administrators*
280+ NEW SPACES	*and/or Behavioral Health Wellness Centers*



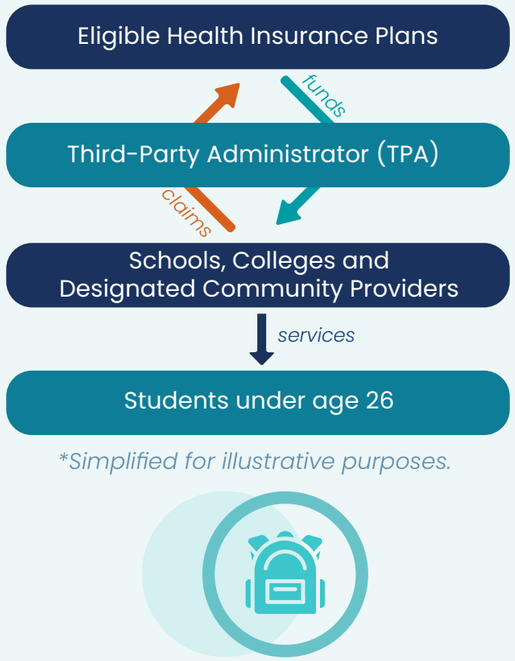
Students walking into a Wellness Center.
Credit: San Luis Obispo County Office of Education

Creating the conditions for successful care delivery

Complementing SBHIP, DHCS launched the School-Linked Partnership and Capacity Grants (SLPG) program with support from the Sacramento and Santa Clara County Offices of Education. SLPG provided $400 million to strengthen school-linked behavioral health services and prepare California public schools for the CYBHI Fee Schedule program. Funding is helping to expand provider capacity, build critical partnerships, and develop the infrastructure needed for sustainable care delivery.

Financing school-linked care for the long term

To sustain school-linked behavioral health services, DHCS introduced the CYBHI Fee Schedule program, a first-of-its-kind initiative in the nation. The program created a reimbursement pathway for LEAs and public institutions of higher education (IHE) to receive funding for outpatient mental health and substance use disorder services delivered in schools or school-linked sites. The program establishes standardized reimbursement rates for services provided to children and youth under age 26 who are enrolled in public TK–12 schools or public colleges and covered by Medi-Cal managed care, Medi-Cal fee-for-service or other regulated health plans.



Families pay no out-of-pocket costs, and existing insurance coverage remains unaffected. Additional details are available in the CYBHI Fee Schedule program manual. By aligning sustainable funding with service delivery, the CYBHI Fee Schedule ensures schools and partners can maintain high-quality behavioral health programs over time.

As of June 1, 2026, 199 school districts, public colleges and care providers submitted more than 230,000 reimbursement claims through this program for 368,000+ services benefiting more than 48,000 students. These entities have received $11.3 million in new revenue from 41 managed care plans or insurers.

"When budgets tighten, supports beyond the classroom are often the first to be cut. This initiative helps keep those services in place because social-emotional learning is just as critical as academics,"

said Laura Dyson, Director of Health Services at Palm Springs Unified.

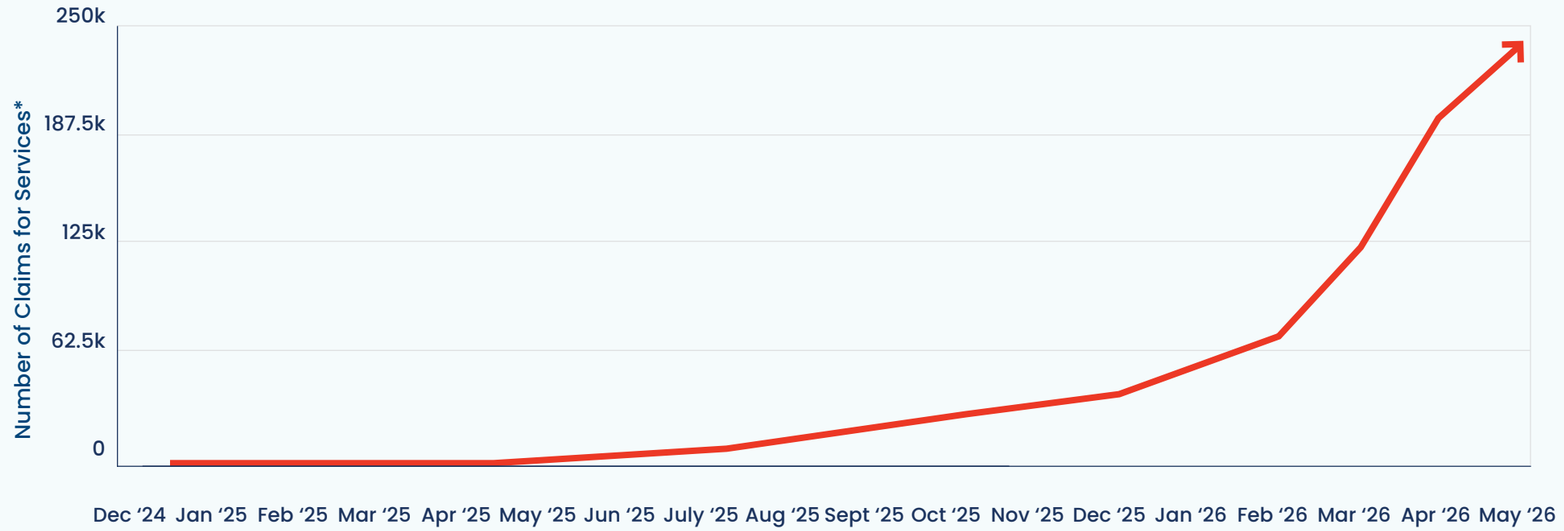
To expand access, LEAs and IHEs can designate affiliated providers, including CBOs, clinics or counties, as eligible for reimbursement, even without formal agreements.

Providers with multiple locations or telehealth capabilities may qualify as statewide affiliated providers, enabling service delivery across all 58 counties.

Kelly Pagan of 5 Peaks Youth Solutions shared, "The CYBHI Fee Schedule has been instrumental in delivering timely, school-based behavioral health services through a coordinated model of wellness coaches and licensed therapists. By funding on-campus care, the program removes barriers like transportation and stigma, improving equitable access, especially in rural areas where provider shortages and long travel distances often limit care."

Together, SBHIP, SLPG and the CYBHI Fee Schedule program form a comprehensive strategy to transform schools into hubs of wellness and services, advancing California's vision for integrated behavioral healthcare.

Number of Claims for Behavioral Health Services financed through the CYBHI Fee Schedule Program



**Each data point represents one claim line paid to a rendering provider through the CYBHI Fee Schedule program. One claim line may include more than one service.*

EDUCATION STRATEGIES

Through CYBHI, California is advancing student wellness and centering schools as hubs of wellness and settings to deliver accessible and high-quality behavioral healthcare.



Strengthening student wellness through classroom practices that advance social and emotional learning, mindfulness, well-being and resilience.

58 COUNTIES
scaling social and emotional learning practices, including intensive efforts at

350+
FOCAL SCHOOLS

Reimagining schools as hubs of behavioral healthcare gives every child access to support, resilience and opportunity.

12K+
SCHOOL AND CHILD CARE STAFF
trained in trauma-informed practices

Integrating services into school settings so that educators and behavioral health professionals work side-by-side to support students where they learn and grow.

230K+
CARE SERVICES REIMBURSED
through the CYBHI Fee Schedule Program as of June 2026

CYBHI Legacy Report 2026

DIGITAL SPACES

CYBHI
Children and Youth
Behavioral Health Initiative

DIGITAL SPACES



Youth at CYBHI's CYF Network Convening
Photo Credit: Alton Pitre / Hoops 4 Justice

In today's world, young people are asking for behavioral health solutions that fit seamlessly into their lives — tools that allow them to reflect privately, learn at their own pace and seek help without barriers. When developed in a youth-centered, safety-first manner, digital platforms offer young people spaces for personal growth and connections to community, experts and even in-person supports, right at their fingertips.

California is building a comprehensive digital ecosystem for behavioral health through CYBHI. Several innovative platforms have been established, and children, youth and families across the state are now accessing a rich selection of resources to foster resilience and coping skills. These tools are complemented by opportunities to connect with supportive communities in moderated environments, ensuring that peer interaction remains safe, positive and constructive. By merging technology with human connection, California is creating a model where digital engagement complements — not replaces — in-person care.

Beyond building digital community and self-help resources, California is also ensuring that professional care is never out of reach, including online. Individuals can now receive coaching support from trained professionals through digital tools and, when needed, connect directly with qualified providers through secure chat-based support, scheduled video telehealth appointments or telephone appointments, which are available in 20 languages in California.

The commitment doesn't stop at today's solutions — it extends to shaping the future of behavioral health. By investing in research tools like Curious and digital therapeutics like Kandoo (described later in this chapter), California is driving innovation that will define the next generation of mental healthcare. These efforts ensure that digital support remains evidence-based, adaptive and responsive to evolving needs.

CARE WITHOUT **WALLS**

UCLA Olympic athletes discuss youth mental health
Photo Credit: Child Mind Institute

Personal reflection

Journaling can offer **significant therapeutic benefits** and provide a structured outlet for thoughts. Writing down experiences, feelings and reflections helps individuals process complex emotions, reduce stress and gain clarity on their mental state. This act of self-expression also serves as a form of emotional release and can support goal-setting and problem-solving. By documenting challenges and brainstorming solutions, individuals create a tangible record of progress and resilience. **Research shows** that expressive writing can improve mood and enhance coping skills. Whether used as a daily practice or during times of stress, journaling is a simple yet powerful tool that promotes mental clarity, emotional balance and personal growth.

Today's youth said they appreciate journaling in different ways, from pen and paper to phone and tablet, switching between modalities sometimes within the same day. To provide an enhanced digital journaling experience, DHCS partnered with young people and child psychologists at the Child Mind Institute to develop Mirror Journaling Application (Mirror), a youth-focused space for self-reflection with adaptive features.

Mirror

Mirror offers personalized summaries of journal entries to support reflection and mindfulness and engages users with guided prompts and mood check-ins — all while ensuring user privacy and security. Only users can access their reflections, and entries are stored locally on their devices. The app also supports mood tracking, enabling users to log their mood before and after each entry and via daily check-ins.

In 10 months since launch (March 2025 to January 2026), more than 23,000 journal entries have been logged by Californians. Users are taking advantage of the multiple journaling approaches offered in the app: 3,980+ entries used clinician-approved writing prompts that help overcome the "blank page" problem, and 1,670+ entries were submitted as audio or video-based entries.

Mirror includes safety features that are able to identify entries for potential safety concerns and link users to support resources if their entries are flagged as high risk — a feature that paper journals cannot offer. As of December 2025, 35 users connected to the 988 Crisis Text Line directly through Mirror, another 40 connected to the California Youth Crisis Line and 52 users connected to the CalHOPE Warm Line.

Mirror

"I use the Mirror journal most during stressful academic moments — AP classes, college applications, even tricky friend-group dynamics. It gives me a safe, private space to vent and process what I'm feeling before I bring things to my therapist. I also love that everything I write is saved, including memories I want to hold onto, and that crisis hotlines are right there if I ever need them."

– NIKITA KAPOOR



California high school student Nikita Kapoor and Yuki Kotani from the Child Mind Institute
Photo Credit: Wellness Together

READ MORE: about how UCLA students are thinking about digital behavioral health support →

A full suite of digital tools

While journaling can be a powerful modality for self-reflection, sometimes we need more guidance and connection to navigate behavioral health challenges. That's where a broader ecosystem of digital supports becomes essential. To that end, in January 2024, California launched two statewide digital platforms to offer children, youth and families — at no cost — access to telehealth services and resources to navigate behavioral health challenges, including one-on-one coaching with trained experts, care navigation and moderated peer support forums.

BrightLife Kids

BrightLife Kids supports the mental and emotional well-being of California's youngest children, ages 0 to 12 years, by focusing on parents and caregivers. Through short, practical activities, expert-backed content, moderated peer communities, and live coaching, BrightLife Kids helps families build skills to support emotions, behavior, routines and resilience wherever it's convenient. The platform, available as a mobile app or via a web browser, is designed to fit into real life — busy schedules, everyday challenges and moments that matter.

California families are embracing BrightLife Kids. As of December 2025, over 330,000 children across all 58 counties have enrolled in the program and over 49,000 coaching sessions have been delivered. More than 3 of every 4 individuals are using the service to engage with formal behavioral healthcare for the first time. Ninety-nine percent of families accessing care reported positive experiences. Over 65% of participants come from underserved communities (as measured by the Healthy Places Index) and 73% identify as Black, Indigenous or persons of color.

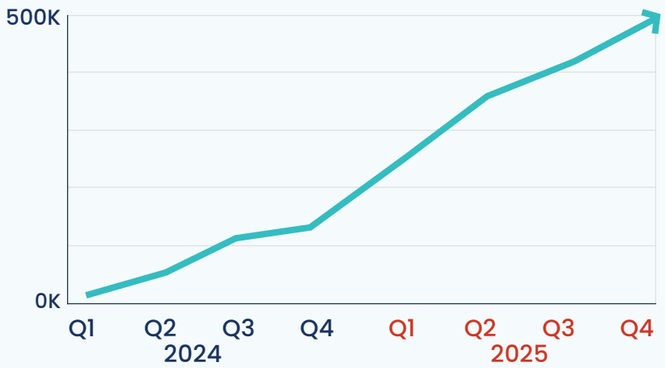
"It's just really encouraging to have somebody on your team who can help break that down for you and give you a place to talk about your journey of parenting in a way that really leaves you feeling empowered and equipped to help continue to lead your family." - Kimberly Voorhis, parent and BrightLife Kids user.

Much like technology itself, BrightLife Kids continues to evolve and innovate. As a result of pilot program success, group coaching sessions became a permanent offering as of 2026.

"At the end of the day, finding this resource [BrightLife Kids] for my child that he actually enjoys and looks forward to is a win, but the fact that we have seen this work is really what matters." – Chelsea

Children and youth using BrightLife Kids and Soluna

Users: 474,184



"Build trust with your child and tap into their intrinsic motivation with phrases like 'When you lower your voice, then we can stay.' Doing so focuses on the reward instead of emphasizing the negative consequence. And when you tell your child 'when you,' you're secretly telling them 'I believe you're going to do it.'"

- PARENTING TIP FROM COACH BRANDO OF BRIGHTLIFE KIDS



Photo Credit: Brando Menjivar

77%

OF INDIVIDUALS ARE USING BRIGHTLIFE KIDS TO ENGAGE WITH FORMAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE FOR THE FIRST TIME

Soluna

Soluna is a free, confidential mental health platform, available as a mobile app or via web browser, designed for California teens and young adults ages 13 to 25. Built with input from thousands of young people, Soluna offers on-demand coaching, self-guided tools, moderated peer support and access to professional help — without requiring insurance or referrals and regardless of immigration status. The platform helps individuals navigate stress, anxiety, relationships, school pressures and big life transitions, all from the comfort of their own homes.

"Soluna has had a calming and grounding effect on my overall sense of wellbeing. It's like having a quiet, steady light guiding you through moments of overwhelm. Whether through helping establish better routines, encouraging reflection, or simply offering a sense of presence during uncertain times, Soluna brings a feeling of balance. It gently reminds you to breathe, check in with yourself and honor your emotions — making space for clarity, peace and self-growth in a world that often feels too loud." – California youth, Age 18.

Since launching in January 2024, young Californians are increasingly leveraging Soluna as a source of support. In just under two years (i.e., through December 2025), over 143,000 individuals — representing **1 in 41 eligible youth statewide and from all 58 California counties** — have signed onto the platform, with **57% of users coming from under-resourced communities** (as measured by the Healthy Places Index). During this period, youth engaged in 51,000+ coaching sessions and exchanged 1.6 million messages with trained coaches. Forty-four percent of coaching sessions occurred outside traditional business hours.

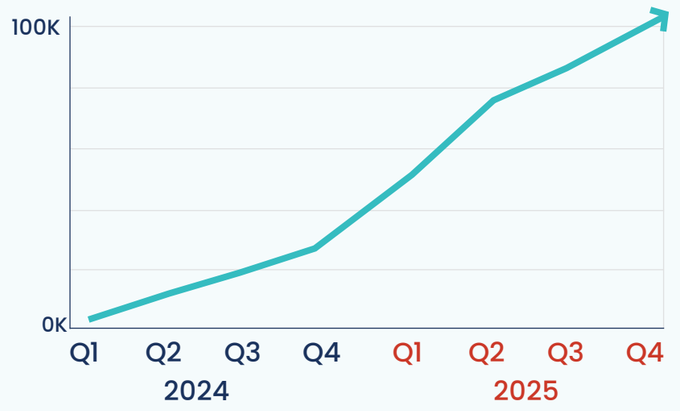
The service is reaching communities that have historically faced high barriers to care. **One in two users report they would not have access to mental health support without Soluna** — underscoring Soluna's role as a critical point of support for youth who might otherwise go without care. In addition, 53% of Soluna users identify as Black, Indigenous or persons of color and 48% identify as Latino/Hispanic.

The average wait time to connect with a coach was four minutes, and 98% of coaching users would recommend Soluna to a friend. Eighty-five percent of users report having at least one need met in a single session, and for 50% Soluna is their first time accessing professional mental health services.

A research study, currently undergoing peer review, demonstrated that young people using Soluna experienced significant improvements in both mental and physical health-related quality of life, including reductions in anxiety, depression, hopelessness, loneliness and suicidal ideation, along with improved quality of life indicators. Improvements persisted at the three-month mark.

Total Coaching Sessions on Soluna and BrightLife Kids

Sessions: 101,680



"Soluna has helped me time and time again with big life changes and processing my feelings with trusted advisors," said college sophomore Ruchita Verma, a psychology and dance and performance studies major. "I love that I'm able to pick a coach who specializes in what I was looking for. I remember feeling safe in my body again after having that conversation."



Ruchita Verma, student at UC Berkeley and Soluna Youth Ambassador
Photo Credit: Ruchita Verma

> I know having a daughter — she's always on my hip — means people think of us as a unit. But I realize I have to work on myself outside of her, so that's why I use Soluna. I enjoy the journaling tools and calming features, and I just like scrolling through it. And BrightLife Kids is about both of us.

– MARIAH DIXON, YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE



Mariah Dixon, Mental Health Advocate and Parent
Credit: Nick Dolph

Connecting to in-person community supports

BrightLife Kids and Soluna also provide comprehensive care navigation services designed to support users in accessing higher acuity or clinical behavioral health support, community resources and social services, ensuring children, youth and families engaging with the platforms start with the right level of support from day one.

As of December 2025, BrightLife Kids has provided live care navigation support to nearly 5,000 families, including over 1,200 referrals for clinical services. Soluna has supported over 1,600 individuals with care navigation support, including 1,300 referrals for clinical services.

By combining early screening with care navigation, BrightLife Kids and Soluna help families move quickly to the right care, reducing delays, improving safety, and ensuring children, youth and families receive the level of support that best meets their needs.

Together, Mirror, Soluna and BrightLife Kids form a connected digital ecosystem supporting young Californians' behavioral health across ages and stages. While BrightLife Kids equips caregivers to nurture emotional well-being early, Soluna provides youth and young adults with direct, developmentally appropriate support as independence grows. Mirror complements both by offering a safe, reflective space for self-expression and emotional processing. Collectively, these tools expand access, reduce barriers and normalize mental health support — helping Californians build skills, resilience and connection wherever they are.



California's First Partner with Soluna Youth Ambassadors and staff.
Credit: Joaquin Rojas

Telehealth clinical services

The role of digital supports is becoming increasingly indispensable, and fast-rising adoption rates reflect the importance of high-quality, accessible virtual prevention-oriented care. These platforms offer everyday support and coaching to complement -- not replace -- licensed clinical care, which remains the setting for formal diagnoses and prescriptions for medications and psychological therapies.

CYBHI supported the expansion of clinical care into digital spaces under the Student Behavioral Health Incentive Program (SBHIP, described in greater detail elsewhere), where five projects increased access to telehealth services through partnerships between schools and managed care plans. In Los Angeles, L.A. Care Health Plan and Health Net leveraged SBHIP to forge deeper relationships with telehealth providers like Hazel Health and provide care in school systems.

"We were particularly interested in SBHIP because it was one of the first times … I had seen, essentially, a program design where healthcare was being charged with how to work better with schools and school districts to facilitate care," said Andrew Post, President of Hazel Health.

By mid-May 2024, the partnership provided **16,300 virtual visits** for students struggling with anxiety, social isolation and other behavioral health concerns. Well more than half of the students served were Black, Indigenous or other persons of color and several participating schools reported **measurable improvements in attendance among those receiving care.**

Learn more about the impact of digital telehealth in Los Angeles →

Stephanie Leung (far left), winner of the Child Mind Institute's 10-Minute Challenge stands with other students. Photo Credit: Child Mind Institute

"I designed my own digital intervention using [Curious] to address an issue I've personally struggled with — developing a healthy relationship with technology — and to support other youth like me … From the initial validation studies, which assessed the social media mindsets of 105 young adults ages 18 to 25, before and immediately after using my intervention, we can see early evidence of the positive impact of this single session intervention on social media attitudes. These early results support healthy relationships with technology." – Stephanie Leung, Mission San Jose High School (Fremont, CA)

SHAPING TOMORROW'S SUPPORTS, **TODAY**

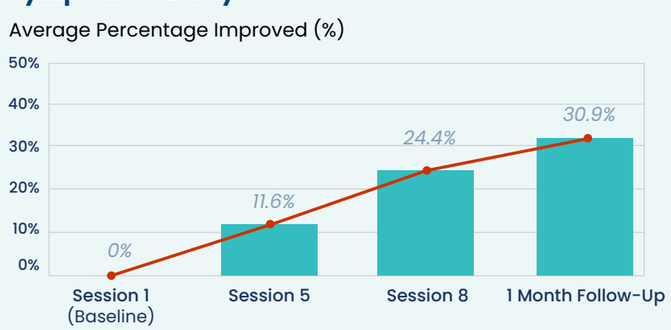
Given the rapid pace of technological innovation, California's digital behavioral health solutions cannot simply address the question of what is needed today — we must seek to understand and shape the future of online services. Through CYBHI, DHCS invested in next generation digital supports to ensure that emerging tools are high-quality, adaptive, safe and ultimately benefit the state's children and youth.

Kandoo

Through a partnership with the Child Mind Institute (CMI), California supported the development of Kandoo, an augmented reality platform designed to support clinician-led Brief Behavioral Activation (BBA) therapy for mild-to-moderate depression in teens. Kandoo aims to increase engagement with value-based activities and mood tracking via an interactive and immersive interface.

While Kandoo is a new clinical tool, it is already demonstrating positive reception among providers using it. The platform is undergoing open trials with clinicians and patients, the Kandoo BBA Community Initiative was launched to engage providers and patients, and an e-learning curriculum was developed and released to accompany the tool. To date, 34 patients have completed an eight-week therapeutic course with one-month follow-up. Preliminary data analysis shows an improvement in symptoms (validated with clinician-administered measurement tools) and a positive trend towards improved daily functioning.

Impact of Kandoo-Augmented Brief Behavioral Activation Therapy on Youth Depressive Symptom Severity



*Improvement calculated using KSADS composite scores

> "I found the brief behavioral activation training helpful. It provided clear, practical strategies for increasing engagement in positive activities and improving mood. The examples and exercises helped me understand how to apply behavioral activation techniques with clients in real scenarios."
>
> – CLINICIAN WITH EMORA HEALTH

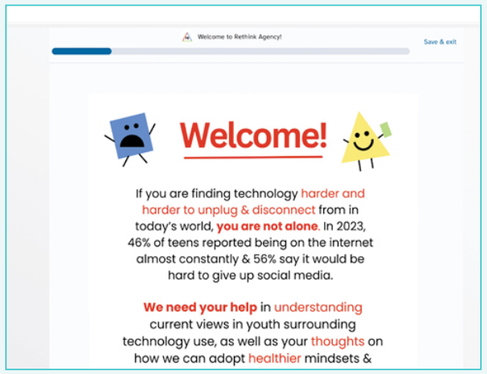
The e-learning curriculum to train clinicians in both BBA methodology and the specific use of the Kandoo platform, as well as the community initiative, will continue to support scalability and uptake. Providers who completed the BBA course have shared positive feedback.

Curious

Also in partnership with the Child Mind Institute, DHCS supported the development of Curious, a no-code platform that was developed to build assessments, collect data and deliver interventions for researchers, clinicians and citizen scientists advancing mental health and well-being. Curious is built to support Ecological Momentary Assessments (EMAs), cognitive tasks and Single Session Interventions (SSIs).

Since its launch in January 2024 through December 2025, 273 accounts have been created on Curious. Youth have been at the center of developing and testing these emerging technologies. Through Curious, California's young people created brief SSIs, research-informed digital tools that can help other young people better understand and manage their mental health.

Meet the winners of the 10-Minute Challenge — a statewide competition that invited Californian youth to leverage **Curious** to design digital solutions that support healthier technology use and youth mental health. Seventy-six submissions were received from California high school, undergraduate and graduate students.

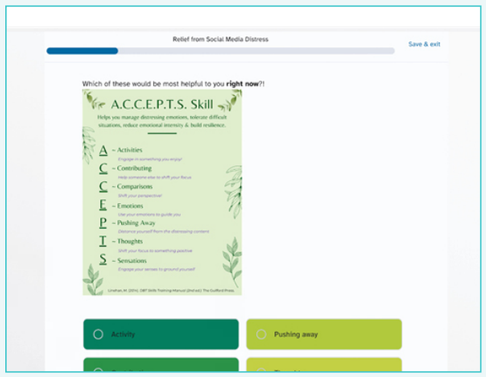


1ST PLACE – HIGH SCHOOL

Rethink Agency

Stephanie Leung, Mission San Jose High School

A reflective three-step intervention that guides teens in rethinking the impact of tech on their well-being, reclaiming personal agency and setting healthy boundaries. The goal of this intervention isn't to shame tech use, but to empower you to use tech in a way that supports your well-being, instead of working against it.

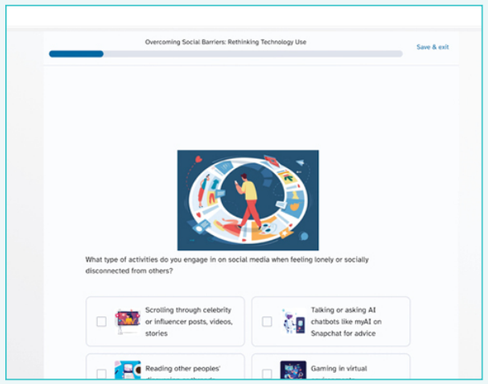


1ST PLACE - UNDERGRADUATE

Overcoming Triggers From Social Media Using A.C.C.E.P.T.S.

Selena Cuevas and Andrew Alvarez, UC Berkeley

A dialectical-behavioral therapy-informed intervention that provides youth with tools to regulate emotional distress from social media through grounding, reframing and resilience-building techniques.



1ST PLACE – GRADUATE SCHOOL

Overcoming Social Barriers

Iris Khan, CSU San Bernardino

This intervention focuses on building psychological capital, guiding participants towards recognizing how social media can be a tool for avoidance behavior, and then reframing it as a resource that can help build meaningful social relationships.

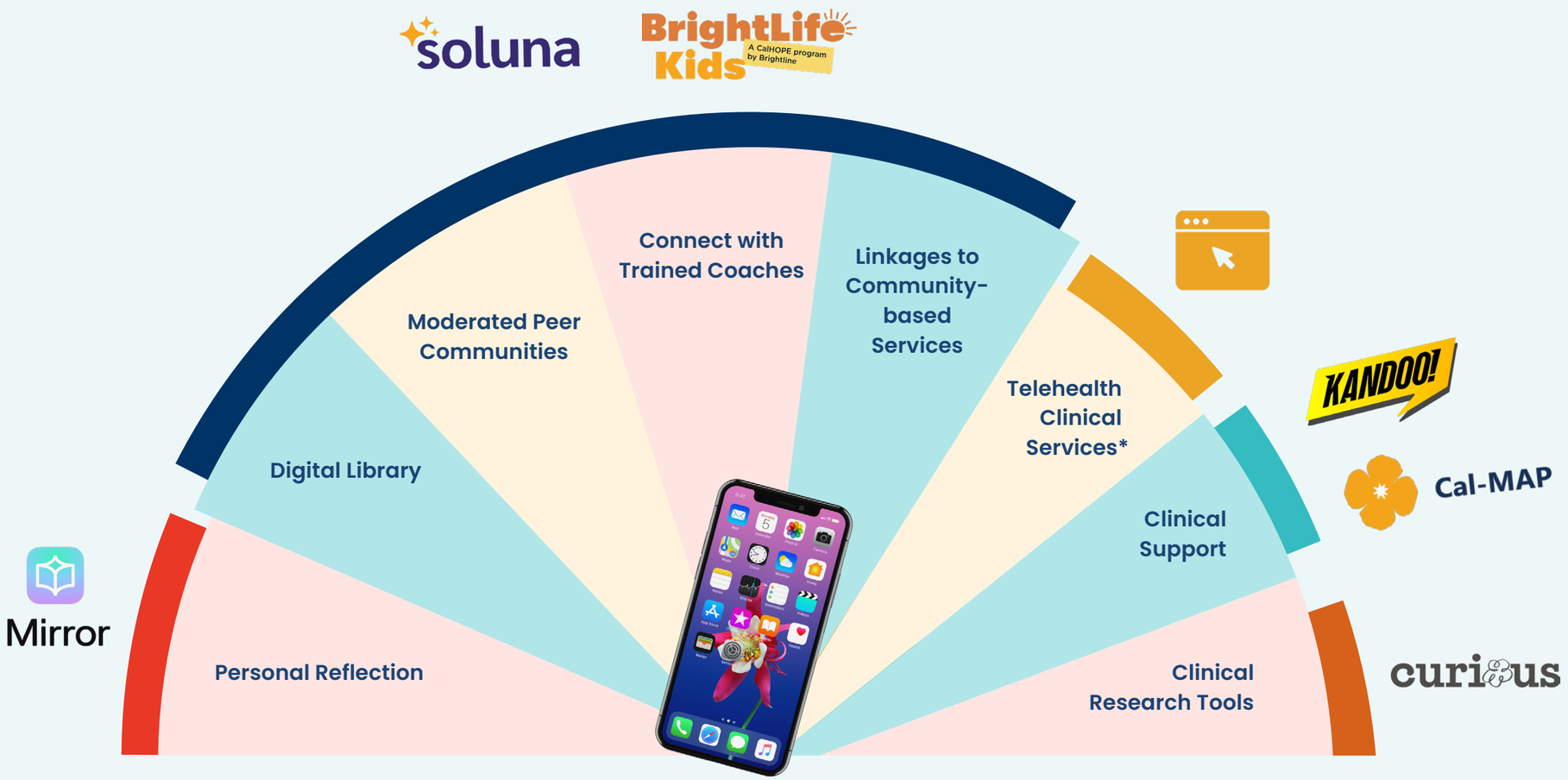


Across California, digital mental health tools are expanding access to support by filling critical gaps and complementing traditional healthcare services. By providing low-barrier entry points to guidance, coaching and even clinical care, these digital solutions help individuals and families navigate challenges early and access support that fits into everyday life — strengthening the broader mental health system across the state.

Youth and state officials gather to promote CYBHI digital supports and campaigns at California Love, California Strong event.

SPECTRUM OF DIGITAL TOOLS

Through CYBHI, **California is expanding access to high-quality services available online.** Collectively, these digital tools have directly served over **500,000** Californians.



**Telehealth clinical service were made available through multiple service providers. Read on to learn more.*

"This platform helped me navigate a really difficult friendship breakup, and I found so much authentic and genuine support… **my favorite feature has to be how diverse the coaching filtering system is**… it's so quick and easy to find someone that you can talk to, you can set your preferences as your focus areas, when you want meet with [coaches], completely free… **I enjoy speaking to my favorite coaches**, especially virtually face-to-face, and being able to drop in is especially amazing."

- Soluna Youth Ambassadors

"We partner with BrightLife Kids because their virtual coaching is accessible, practical and supportive for families. We refer families frequently and hear consistent reports of progress in behavior, communication and daily routines. **BrightLife Kids is a trusted resource in our community.**"

- Los Angeles Dept of Public Health / Help Me Grow LA

CYBHI Legacy Report 2026

HEALTHCARE SETTINGS

CYBHI
Children and Youth
Behavioral Health Initiative

HEALTHCARE SETTINGS



Credit: Robert Won

The mind and body are not separate, and as California builds on its commitment to advancing a whole-person approach to lifelong wellness, improving access to clinical behavioral healthcare services is critical.

Accessible, timely and high quality care is the imperative: **the most common age at diagnosis** for depression is 20 years, and for anxiety, it is even younger — just 15 years. Early intervention programs for conditions ranging from depression to psychosis demonstrably improve trajectories for young people. Moreover, these benefits extend into the classroom: when children and youth receive the behavioral healthcare they need, they not only experience improved health outcomes but also **perform better academically**.

However, the system remains strained. There are not enough behavioral healthcare providers to meet current needs, and many primary care providers lack the right supports, including a need for more training, better systems and adequate physical spaces to effectively deliver care. All 58 counties are projected to **face a shortage** across all behavioral health roles. Young people **expressed a desire** to receive care from providers who not only look like them but explicitly understand them.

In light of capacity gaps and system pressures, health professionals often find themselves operating in crisis mode. Rather than practicing at the top of their licensure or expertise, they are compelled to do whatever is necessary to meet immediate demands. This reactive approach, while essential in the moment, underscores the strain on systems and the need for sustainable workforce development and support.

Addressing this crisis within the healthcare sector effectively requires an all-hands approach. Through CYBHI, California is expanding and reimagining the behavioral health workforce while strengthening the physical and system infrastructure that supports care delivery. At the same time, CYBHI supports primary care providers with tools and resources to ensure professionals are able to engage in tasks and responsibilities commensurate with their positions and training. Not only is this a matter of professional integrity — it is critical to delivering high-quality, equitable care.

REIMAGINING PRIMARY CARE

Primary care serves as the bedrock of pediatric healthcare, offering consistent, trusted engagement with children and their families from the earliest stages of life.

Left to Right: Diane Halberg MD, pediatrician and UCSF professor of pediatrics at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland, walks with Dr. Michelle Riederer, Associate Director of Community Engagement, Liaison at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital and Cal-MAP consultant.

In the first four years alone, a child should see their primary care provider 13 times. These visits serve a critical role in monitoring growth, development and overall well-being. Within regular encounters, early signs of conditions such as autism spectrum disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and anxiety are often first brought to the attention of providers.

Strengthening and supporting this front line of pediatric care is essential to ensuring timely identification and intervention, ultimately improving long-term health and developmental outcomes for California's children.

Shaping primary care to be a behavioral healthcare *destination*, not a pass-through.

Children are typically brought to care by parents or caregivers, some of whom face their own challenges with mental health or substance use which may lead them to engage with their own doctors less frequently. Through dyadic care — an evidence-based approach to support the well-being of both caregiver and child together — California is working toward a vision where families receive consistent preventive care, experience fewer crises and child development is better supported.



Mother and son with pediatrician at well-care visit. Credit: Robert Won

Through CYBHI, substantial advances have been made in expanding dyadic care. A total of $21.4 million in DHCS grants scaled proven care models, such as HealthySteps, Parent Child Interaction Therapy, Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch up, and Child Parent Psychotherapy. More than 40 youth-serving organizations were supported with grants, helping providers reach families earlier and with more coordinated support.

Dyadic care in action

In San Diego, Rady Children's Hospital is implementing the HealthySteps approach, which has been shown to increase the likelihood of attending well-child visits on time, being up-to-date on vaccinations and having a lower likelihood of visiting the emergency room due to injuries.

During a routine clinic visit, one of the team's HealthySteps Specialists (HSS) noticed that the caregiver of a young child shared that they were feeling overwhelmed and noted that an older sibling had begun showing aggressive behavior toward the younger child. The HSS listened and offered practical strategies to help manage the sibling's behavior.

A week later, the HSS followed up to check on progress. The caregiver reported that while the initial suggestions had helped somewhat, additional support was needed. Together, they discussed options and agreed on a program that provides parent coaching and behavioral support. The HSS collaborated with the pediatrician to initiate the referral and continued care coordination until the family was successfully connected to services. Through consistent follow-up and partnership, the family gained access to resources that addressed behavioral challenges and strengthened caregiver confidence.

40,000+
MEDI-CAL MEMBERS HAVE BENEFITED FROM THE DYADIC SERVICES DELIVERED BY
600+
PROVIDERS

"Collaboration with HealthySteps has expanded our clinic's ability to serve the whole family. We serve families with high levels of stress — emotional, financial, and more. Parents are worried, and as providers we take on that stress. Since [our HealthySteps Specialist] started, my own level of stress has diminished simply by sharing the load with another professional."

– JESSICA AXELROD RN, CPNP, PEDIATRIC NURSE PRACTITIONER, ZUCKERBERG SAN FRANCISCO GENERAL HOSPITAL



More and more families – particularly those in the Medi-Cal system – are receiving support like this through Medi-Cal's dyadic services benefit, which provides Dyadic Behavioral Health well-child visits, Dyadic Comprehensive Community Supports Services, Dyadic Psychoeducational Services, and Dyadic Family Training and Counseling for Child Development. As of October 28, 2025, over 40,000 Medi-Cal members have benefited from the dyadic services delivered by over 600 providers.

Sometimes even doctors need advice.

Let's face it … society asks a lot of child-serving primary care providers: to ensure proper growth and development; address concerns brought by parents; administer preventive measures, including vaccinations; assess for concerning exposures, such as lead; reinforce healthy diet and exercise routines; screen for the use of illicit substances; provide anticipatory guidance; and document it all. And they are supposed to do this (and more) in 15 minutes or less.

Fresno-based primary care physician Dr. Tamika Kido acknowledges this pressure and the importance of being supported. "I think if there is a pressure to see volume, you get compassion fatigue. You start feeling more unsure that you're actually making a difference, or how to really do that effectively. Having resources and tools available increases your feeling of confidence and willingness to keep trying and not to just send everybody to the emergency room."

To support primary care providers, California established the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Access Portal, or Cal-MAP. Cal-MAP's team of psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers provide no-cost consultation, education and resource navigation to care providers managing behavioral health issues in young people. This includes advice on screening, diagnosis and treatment, and guidance on resources and referrals.

As of February 1, 2026, 4,772 providers from 53 counties were registered with Cal-MAP. More than 4,600 youth have benefited from over 7,400 consultations. Because consulting on a single patient expands a provider's knowledge and skills in ways that improve care for others — and Cal-MAP registered providers care for an estimated 3.9 million California youth — the ripple effect is substantial.

53% OF THE TIME

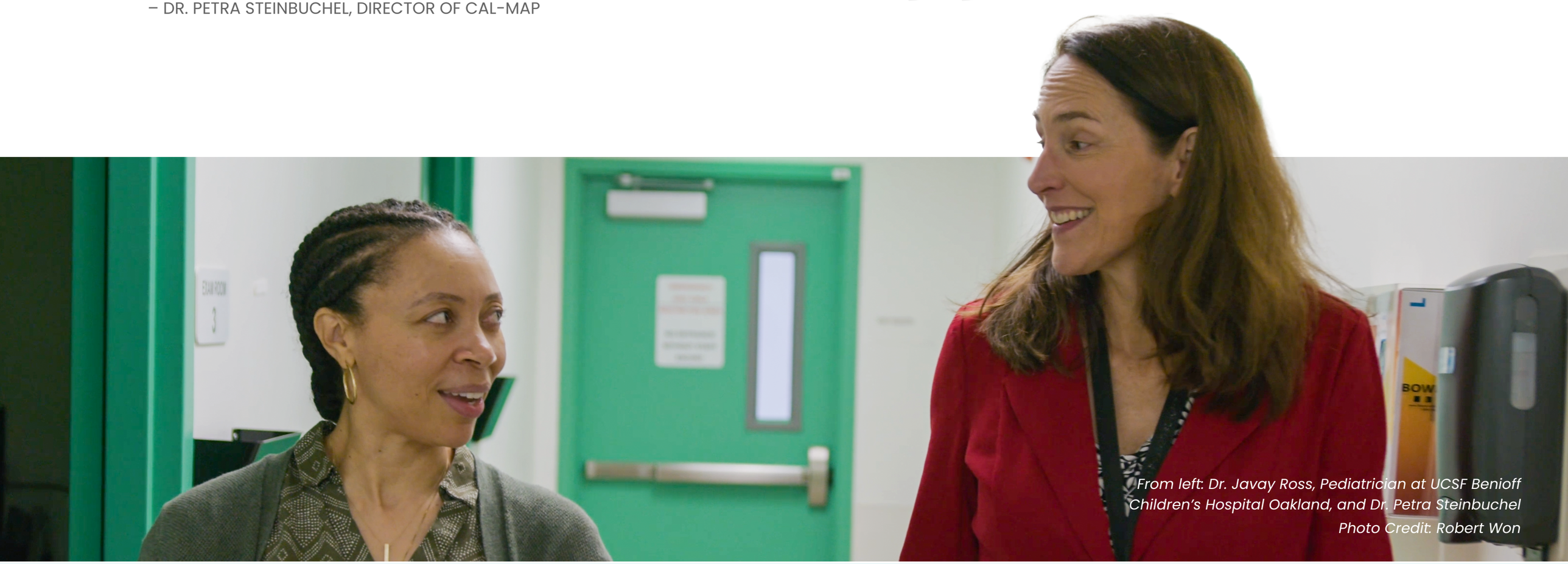
THE PATIENT REMAINS IN PRIMARY CARE WITH CAL-MAP

CAL-MAP SERVICES



> What you see above the surface is behavior, but below that are the drivers, trauma, unmet needs, cultural context, family stress. When providers learn to look deeper, they stop asking, 'What's wrong with this child?' and start asking, 'What happened to them, and how can we help?'

– DR. PETRA STEINBUCHEL, DIRECTOR OF CAL-MAP



From left: Dr. Javay Ross, Pediatrician at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland, and Dr. Petra Steinbuchel
Photo Credit: Robert Won

> "You have no idea how much it means to me that I can talk with someone … To know that when it goes beyond my comfort zone, I am able to reach out and get help."
>
> – IRMGARD TACKIE, MD, FAAP PEDIATRICIAN, COMMUNITY PRACTICE, FONTANA, CA.

The approach also keeps youth and families within the familiarity of their community and existing care network: **when providers connect with Cal-MAP for consultation, in more than 53% of cases, the patient remains in primary care and does not end up needing to make a separate appointment (sometimes hours away) to visit a behavioral health specialist.**

For Nancy Netherland, a Berkeley parent and longtime behavioral health professional, Cal-MAP support was life-changing. Her two children have complex medical and behavioral health needs, including histories of trauma and chronic illness. Early intervention was crucial but finding it through traditional systems was challenging.

"[With Cal-MAP] It was the first time I felt like someone really saw my kids," she said. "Their doctor could look at their physical and mental health together, not separately. My kids are not the same race as I am," said Nancy. "So, having providers who understand the cultural pieces, the racial trauma, the biases that show up in diagnosis, means everything. For my son to sit with someone who looked like him and identified as neurodivergent, it changed his world."



A mother and daughter meet with their pediatrician. Credit: Robert Won

2,855

CARE PROVIDERS HAD COMPLETED LIVE TRAININGS THROUGH CAL-MAP

As of February 1, 2026

Preparing providers: Training the primary care workforce

In addition to patient-specific consultations, Cal-MAP specialists are training primary care providers on key clinical topics including from autism spectrum disorder, complex ADHD, depression and SSRI medication guidance. Through Cal-MAP, as of December 31, 2025, 756 individuals had completed online training, and as of February 1, 2026, 2,855 individuals had completed live trainings.

Primary care teams are also engaging in training opportunities funded by a CYBHI collaboration between HCAI and the UC Irvine School of Medicine. Through this partnership, scholarships are offered for primary care fellowship programs in three fields: psychiatry, child and adolescent psychiatry and addiction medicine.



Dr. Joan Jeung, Cal-MAP Senior Associate Director. Credit: DHCS

The goals of these fellowships are to train primary care providers on how to complete evidence-based substance use screenings and psychiatric interviews in the busy primary care or medical setting, how to effectively diagnose and treat commonly encountered substance use and psychiatric conditions, and how to teach these principles to their primary care colleagues.

Additionally, these programs encourage primary and emergency care providers, child and adolescent psychiatrists, public mental health nurse practitioners, and licensed social workers to provide healthcare at practice sites where at least 50% of the patients are from a medically-underserved population. Since 2019, funding has supported 1,295 scholarships to primary care providers.

Healthcare team members — including social workers, nurses, psychologists and physicians — have also sought out CYBHI trainings designed to improve their understanding and approaches to stress and trauma. **Safe Spaces**, a training established by the Office of the California Surgeon General, helps individuals recognize and respond to signs of stress and trauma in youth. Care providers are among the thousands who have completed the course so far, and through January 2026, continuing medical education credits were awarded to more than 230 individuals.

Sharing resources with patients

Additionally, primary care, behavioral health and other community-based providers are sharing youth-designed *Live Beyond* campaign resources and tools with patients and peers. The campaign collaborated with the California Academy of Family Medicine (CAFP), California chapters of the **American Academy of Pediatricians (AAP)** and over 100 doctor's offices across California to provide materials and educate patients about ACEs. It goes well beyond sharing resources and raising awareness – it's about creating spaces for youth and families to start conversations with providers that may lead to lifelong healing.

"Here at San Fernando Valley Community Mental Health Center, the *Live Beyond* toolkit has been an invaluable addition to our ACEs lobbies, group rooms and events. Our clients consistently benefit from all of the material in English and Spanish, especially the fact sheets, grounding journals, bookmarks, educational tip sheets, palm and stress buster pocket cards that support learning and healing on the go. Families and youth alike have been inspired to deepen their healing journey — and our younger clients especially gravitate toward the posters and stickers that make resilience feel both accessible and empowering."

– EBONIE THOMAS, M.F.A., ACES NETWORK OF CARE MANAGER, SAN FERNANDO VALLEY COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER, INC.



California communities are creating and expanding places of care for children and youth, as well pregnant and postpartum individuals and their infants.

EXPANDING ACCESS TO SERVICES, BRICK BY BRICK

Ribbon cutting for the Safe Passages Community Wellness and Prevention Center in Oakland, CA.

$480.5 MILLION

AWARDED TO

50 PARTNERS

AND SERVING

1 MILLION

INDIVIDUALS ANNUALLY

California is confronting the shortage of youth-serving behavioral health facilities, both inpatient and ambulatory. This inadequacy has left many young people without timely access to critical care, exacerbating crises and placing immense strain on both families and emergency systems.

The Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP, Round 4: Children and Youth Grant), supported by DHCS, was built to help address this need. Communities are creating and expanding places of care for children and youth 25 and younger, including pregnant and postpartum women and their children, transition-age youth (ages 18 to 25), individuals and their families.

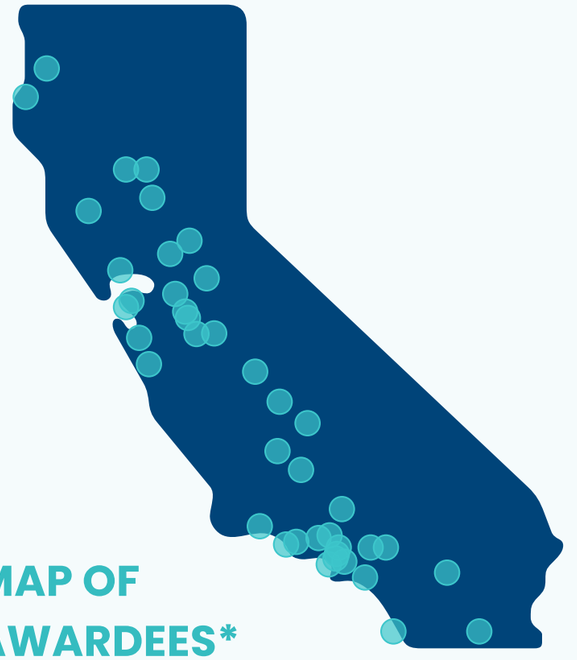
Through the (BHCIP) Round 4: Children and Youth Grant, healthcare facilities are expanding access and launching more services throughout California — from crisis residential programs and perinatal residential substance use treatment facilities to community wellness and youth prevention centers and outpatient substance use treatment programs.

(BHCIP) Round 4: Children and Youth Grant program, funded by CYBHI and administered through DHCS, awarded 50 entities a total of $480.5 million across California. This investment is supporting 69 behavioral health facilities that added 534 new residential/inpatient beds and 8,306 annual outpatient treatment slots projected to serve more than one million individuals annually.

Safe Passages is leveraging these resources to open a new Community Wellness and Prevention Center to serve the children and youth of Oakland. The center provides a range of services for youth and parenting including mental health services, parenting education, perinatal and early childhood mental health programs, a Life Coaching program, career exploration sessions and more. The center is projected to serve more than 7,600 individuals annually.

“For more than 29 years, Safe Passages has been committed to breaking the cycle of poverty in our communities and to supporting families and youth to engage in the development of our own solutions and paths,” said Safe Passages CEO Josefina Alvarado Mena. “This wellness center is a gathering space and safe haven where we can build community, share and grow together.”

BHCIP ROUND 4:
CHILDREN & YOUTH



MAP OF AWARDEES*

**Facilities being constructed or expanded through BHCIP Round 4 Funding*

Youth were clear: Give me mental health support from someone who looks like and talks like me — someone who understands my identities and my story.

BUILDING A WORKFORCE FOR TODAY, & TOMORROW

Photo Credit: Joaquin Rojas

Increasing access to behavioral health support means increasing the number of providers and cultivating a workforce that reflects California's communities — where children and youth can connect with someone who understands their culture, language and lived experience. To meet this challenge, California is accelerating supports across the entire workforce continuum, sparking interest among high school students, supporting college graduates and individuals with lived experience and equipping existing professionals with advanced training. This comprehensive approach ensures that every stage of the workforce journey — from early exposure to career advancement — contributes to a robust, inclusive system of care.

California's workforce strategy includes cultivating interest in behavioral healthcareers early along one's journey. Within this strategy, high school students are not only a representation of the future workforce, but active participants in shaping that future. Through initiatives like peer-to-peer programs and the Youth Mental Health Academy, CYBHI seeks to provide youth with the agency to lead, support peers and build pathways to care.



Francesca Português
Credit: Werehaus Creative Studio

Youth Mental Health Academy

Lindhurst High School student Francesca Português aspires to become a psychiatric nurse and support under-resourced communities.

"I want to help communities that don't have the type of healthcare they deserve, because sometimes there is no one there for them. I want to be there for them." **Francesca Português** about the Youth Mental Health Academy

Through CYBHI, Francesca was one of more than 2,500 high-school students in California who were able to explore their interests further through the Youth Mental Health Academy (YMHA). YMHA – developed by the Child Mind Institute with support from HCAI — offers students financial support through paid internships and hands-on learning via coursework in mental health science, practice, and communications through project-based learning, mentorship and integrated support.

Learn more about Capstone Projects from students participating in the Youth Mental Health Academy →

The program aims to reach historically underserved youth and, to date, the data show promising early results. Applicants range between 14 and 19 years of age, and the largest demographic of participants is Latine youth, representing 43% of academy members. More than 24% of participants identified as LGBTQ.

> "Getting this experience as an 18-year-old about to go to college gives me more hope that being a mental health professional is really achievable."
>
> – MEMBER, CYBHI YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH ACADEMY

"Doing this program has made me realize how much more I want to help someone mentally, especially because mental health is something that's not [frequently] talked about," said participant Diego Ricart. Another student, Victor, shared, "[YMHA] has inspired me and showed me all of these opportunities that are available — and encouraged me to seek out the career I can have in mental health. I'm so grateful for this opportunity."

Paid internships were a critical component of the approach to develop skills and offer young people a sense of belonging in the mental health field. As one YMHA intern with the Crisis Text Line said,

"Getting this experience as an 18-year-old about to go to college gives me more hope that being a mental health professional is really achievable."

High school peers supporting peers

In challenging times, many of us turn to our peers for support — a response that is both instinctive and evidence-based. While most research and implementation of peer support strategies have focused on adults, CYBHI explored this approach for youth. With grant funding from DHCS and support from The Children's Partnership, eight high schools across the state are piloting peer-to-peer support programs.

At each site, high school students are supported to become "peer mentors." Through role-playing, sharing circles and one-on-one practice sessions, young people learn skills in conflict mediation and trauma-informed care, even obtaining academic credit for their training. Topics covered included active listening, communication skills, restorative practices, mindfulness, tobacco use prevention education, racial equity, mental health first aid, and healing-centered engagement.

In the first year of the program across the eight schools, 140 high school students served as peer mentors and provided services to 936 fellow students. Early evidence demonstrates that these practices are resulting in a win-win: the vast majority of students receiving peer-based services (96%) reported improved mental health, and peer mentors overwhelmingly reported improvements in their communication skills and more confidence in their abilities.

96%

OF STUDENTS RECEIVING PEER-BASED SERVICES REPORTED IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH

Learn More about findings from the High School Peer-to-Peer Program's Year 1 Impact Report →



Youth gather to participate in a peer to peer program.

31

GRANTS TO ORGANIZATIONS, ALLOWING

10,045

YOUNG PEOPLE ACCESS TO PROGRAMS AND INTERNSHIPS

Expanding pathways into healthcareers

Pathway programs are structured initiatives that guide individuals into behavioral healthcareers through education mentorship, and hands-on experience. These programs provide a better understanding for young people to move from exploration to training to employment, reducing barriers such as cost, lack of exposure and uncertainty about career options.

Through HCAI's Health Professions Pathways Program, California awarded 31 grants to organizations, offering 10,045 young people with access to pipeline programs, summer internships and post undergraduate fellowships in their communities.

Peer Support Specialists

Marshea Pratt, Vice President of Workforce and Community Engagement for National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) California, says it best: "People with lived experience know … [how] to get at the heart of what's really going on with you in a way that is respectful, in a way that's not intimidating, and in a way that has just a different type of compassion."

California is taking these words to heart and expanding the number of Peer Support Specialists in the state, individuals with lived experience of mental health or substance use challenges who are trained to channel that experience to support others and their recovery.

Since 2022, HCAI has awarded $46 million through 49 grants, which have collectively trained and placed more than 10,000 individuals. Katrina Copple, Program Coordinator at Wise University's Peer Personnel Training and Placement Program, notes that, "When you can understand and meet someone where they're at with that cultural lens, it gives the individual the opportunity to feel validated in their experiences and also to know that they hold value within that culture and that there are additional ways to heal."

These services benefit both the provider and client. Jessica Miller, of the Self-Help And Recovery Exchange (SHARE!), stated "I'm a recovering heroin addict. I've been sober for almost six years now, and I have tried to get sober many times, but I've never been sober this long, and I think a big part of my sobriety is actually being able to work in this field and give back." Caitlin Mendibles, also from SHARE!, adds, "After completing the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist training, I was able to start a new career and use my lived experience to help others — being a peer support specialist is life-changing."

Learn more about about the important role of Peer Support Specialists →

$46 MILLION

THROUGH

49 GRANTS

THAT HAVE COLLECTIVELY TRAINED AND PLACED MORE THAN 10,000 PEER SUPPORTERS



A group of Peer Support Specialists from SHARE!, a peer-run nonprofit in Los Angeles.

Certified Wellness Coaches

In response to requests from youth, California codified a new profession through CYBHI: the Certified Wellness Coach (CWC). Coaches are individuals with applicable experience and academic credentials who work in teams, under the supervision of licensed or otherwise qualified professionals, to provide important behavioral health support to children and youth. The CWC profession can also be a stepping-stone to future career opportunities, as the coaches of today might continue their professional journey and become the clinicians and counselors of tomorrow.

As of March 2026, more than 4,200 individuals are now recognized as Certified Wellness Coaches in California. Of the 638 individuals who have received scholarships from HCAI to pursue college degree programs and become CWCs, 83% are first-generation college students, 64% report lived experience of homelessness, 41% report prior foster care involvement, and in total, 19 different languages are spoken by these individuals.

Vincent believes part of his role as a CWC is to reduce the stigma around mental health, particularly in his Asian Pacific Islander community. Megan, who grew up in the community she now services, sees part of the role as paying it forward.

"I grew up in Colfax, California, so this community is really special to me. My job is extremely rewarding and I feel really honored to serve the families and children of Colfax in the community that raised me."

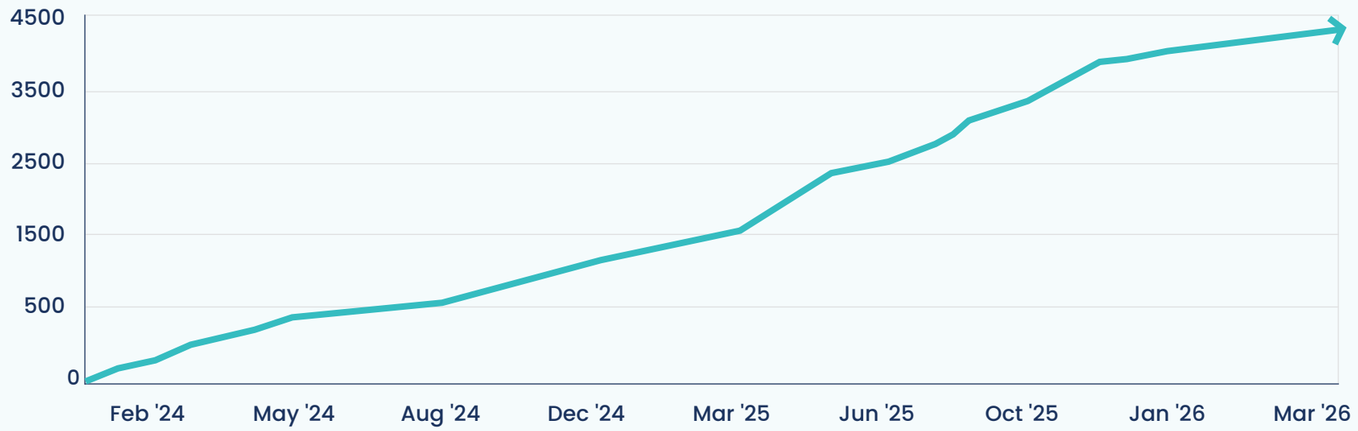
Employers including schools, community organizations and health centers, are actively integrating Certified Wellness Coaches into existing teams to expand capacity for prevention and early intervention services. Since 2022, HCAI has awarded roughly $126 million through 64 grants to employers who then supported the certification of 564 coaches to date, with more coming online.

"We want to ensure that our students are not only coming to schools but coming to school ready to learn. Having CWC on our school campuses has been extremely valuable, particularly for our families experiencing many issues … to access basic mental health supports." – Will Celestine, Director of Wellness Programs for Los Angeles Unified School District, which has 128 student and family resource navigators certified as wellness coaches.

Substance Use Disorder Counselors

Through CYBHI, opportunities are increasing for individuals to receive education and paid job experience en route to earning a Substance Use Disorder certification. Since 2023, HCAI has awarded $23.5 million to six organizations, which are collectively training 584 individuals to serve as Substance Use Disorder (SUD) providers.

Number of Certified Wellness Coaches





On my mentorship caseload was a young man [whose] dad tragically passed away… and this downturn started to happen. I just began to work with him. We created this plan… and we checked in every week. Last week, he comes into my office, sets down his backpack, claps his hands and says, 'Mr. Jordan, I passed all my classes' … and he starts crying and says, 'My dad would be so proud of me.' **And I looked at him and I knew something had changed. He just needed somebody to be there and support him.**

– **JORDAN COLEMAN**, CERTIFIED WELLNESS COACH

Jordan Coleman (second from left) joins Governor Newsom and Dr. Sohil Sud, Bart Renderos and Dr. Virgil Moorehead, Jr (front row, left to right) to discuss statewide efforts to expand opportunity, connection and well-being for men.

In Eureka, which has a severe shortage of health professionals, Louis Christiansen received support for his internship at Waterfront Recovery Services. “The Rural and Tribal Substance Use Disorder Earn and Learn program has been very helpful for me and my family. The support from this program has given me the ability to pursue the work that I love.”

Michael Salinas, Co-Founder & Executive Director of Youth Recovery Connections in Hollister, CA, sees such promise in individuals receiving this support. “True greatness is found in those who commit themselves to guiding these young individuals through their struggles and adversities. With compassion and support, they help uncover strengths that may have gone unnoticed. Witnessing their transformation into successful adults serves as a powerful reminder that resilience and hope can lead to remarkable outcomes. It shows that with the right guidance, even the most challenging paths can lead to a brighter future.”



Michael Salinas (second from right), Co-Founder & Executive Director Youth Recovery Connections in Hollister, CA
Credit: Photo courtesy of Youth Recovery Connections

Expanding training programs

CYBHI investments also focus on expanding the capacity of the public behavioral health system. Programs such as the Public Behavioral Health Social Work Training and Fellowship Program, Social Work Education Capacity Expansion, and Psychiatric Education Capacity Expansion are increasing the number of trained professionals available every year to serve children and youth.

In California, social work programs are graduating an increasing number of professionals who subsequently join the behavioral health workforce, supported by funding that expands program capacity. Since 2023, HCAI has awarded more than $78 million through 30 grants to expand and develop new bachelor’s and master’s programs in social work at institutions of higher learning throughout the state. The effort is projected to graduate 1,145 more students in the short term, with this number only expected to grow with each subsequent graduating cohort.

For more than 10 years, California has also invested in expanding psychiatric education programs for both physicians and nurse practitioners. Through augmented funding from CYBHI, in 2023, HCAI awarded 24 grants, totaling $55.8 million, to support training of a combined 834 residents, fellows and nurse practitioner students, with the same expectation that these programs will continue training additional participants into the future.

$55.8 MILLION

AWARDED IN 24 GRANTS BY HCAI IN 2023, SUPPORTING

834

RESIDENTS, FELLOWS & STUDENTS

Scholarship and loan repayment programs

Training is expensive — and financial barriers are known to prevent passionate individuals from serving the public in behavioral health roles. To ease financial burden, California is supporting loan repayment programs and scholarships that make education more accessible and incentivize service in communities where support is most needed. Through $49 million in grants to programs like the Behavioral Health Scholarship Program (BHSP) and the Wellness Coach Scholarship Program (WCSP), California supported 1,831 individuals enrolled or accepted into eligible behavioral health programs.

> "Your investment in my education empowers me to continue serving vulnerable populations with compassion, cultural humility and clinical excellence. Thank you again for your generous support and for believing in my potential to make a meaningful contribution to the behavioral health field. I am committed to upholding the values of this program throughout my education and beyond."
>
> – SELAM, SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

Together, these workforce investments are doing more than filling vacancies. They are reshaping who enters the behavioral health field, how they are supported, and who and where they serve. By centering equity, lived experience and community partnership, CYBHI is helping build a workforce capable of meeting California's children, youth and families with compassion, competence and care — for generations to come.



Certified Wellness Coach, Wil Cason, supports students at Albany High School.
Photo Credit: California Department of Healthcare Access and Information

From 2021 to 2025:

CYBHI WORKFORCE INVESTMENTS*

** = primarily but not exclusively through CYBHI funding streams*

2,500+
youth (primary in high school) have participated in training and paid summer internships through the Youth Mental Health Academy

34,100+
high school, college and graduate students participated in behavioral health pipeline programs, internships, postundergraduate fellowships and post-baccalaureate scholarships

200+
justice and system-involved youth have been supported through pipeline programs, internships, post undergraduate fellowships and post-baccalaureate scholarships

1,000+
individuals received support through education and paid job experience to receive certification as providers of substance use disorder services

10,200+
peer support specialists have been recruited, trained and placed in organizations

550+
certified wellness coaches have been brought into the workforce through employer grants

2,370+
scholarships were awarded to individuals to pursue academic programs in behavioral health (e.g., allied BH, advanced BH, certified wellness coach)

4,200+
individuals have become certified wellness coaches

620+
social work students received stipends to support training in public behavioral health

1,100+
additional slots have been opened in social work programs, with another 310 coming online this year

1,350+
new permanent slots have been opened in psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner programs

270+
new permanent slots have been opened in psychiatry medical residency programs

530+
primary care providers received fellowship scholarships to pursue advanced behavioral health training

12,200+
behavioral health professionals received support to work in community-based programs through hiring bonuses, retention bonuses, scholarships, stipends or loan repayments

820+
behavioral health professionals received support through loan repayment programs

EXPANDING WORKFORCE

NEXT GEN WORKFORCE

E.g., high school students, college students and graduate students

36,700+
INDIVIDUALS SUPPORTED

to explore behavioral healthcareer paths through pipeline programs, internships, scholarships and fellowships

SUPERVISED PROFESSIONALS

E.g., peer support specialists, certified wellness coaches, substance use counselors

34,500+
INDIVIDUALS SUPPORTED

through expanded training opportunities, hiring bonuses, paid job experience stipends, retention bonuses, scholarships, stipends, loan repayments and employment support all of which were designed to incentivize service in the public and/or in underserved areas of California.

INDEPENDENT PRACTITIONERS

E.g., social workers, nurse practitioners, primary care providers, psychiatrists

CYBHI Legacy Report 2026

CONNECTING SYSTEMS & CHANGING CONVERSATIONS

CYBHI
Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative

CONNECTING SYSTEMS, CHANGING CONVERSATIONS



Shailen Dawkins Never a Bother Youth Advisor presents at the 2025 Wellness Together Conference.
Credit: Wellness Together

Behavioral health services can only fulfill their purpose if young people in need of support are aware of existing resources and can realistically access these services. Equally important is fostering a sense of self-worth, as stigma and internalized beliefs often prevent people from reaching out even when services are known. If someone feels undeserving or fears judgment, the system remains out of reach.

However, awareness and self-worth alone are not enough; the system itself must be transformed to remove barriers and actively facilitate access for all. This means integrating and aligning efforts across many sectors, including but not limited to health, education, social services, probation, child welfare, and tribal and community organizations. Fragmented systems create barriers that individuals cannot bridge on their own.

Through many efforts, including CYBHI, California is building a behavioral health ecosystem that promotes coordinated care pathways and shared accountability frameworks. At the same time, statewide public awareness campaigns are beginning to shift the culture around mental health — normalizing asking for help, elevating youth voice and creating shared language for stress, trauma and healing. Together, these system changes and narrative shifts are redefining what behavioral health looks like in California: easier to access, centered on prevention and built around the lived experiences of youth and families.

Youth-centered public awareness campaigns encouraged action and focused on populations most impacted by behavioral health challenges with messages of education, support and resilience.

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

Photo Credit: Mathematica

Public awareness campaigns such as ***Take Space to Pause***, ***Live Beyond*** and ***Never a Bother*** tackled stigma and increased awareness of our body's stress response, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and suicide prevention.

Taking Space to Pause

California's *Take Space to Pause* campaign was designed to remind young people that slowing down, checking in with themselves and reaching out for support are powerful acts of strength — not signs of weakness.

The campaign, launched by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), was designed to address a critical barrier to youth well-being: stigma and low mental health literacy that prevent teens from seeking support before reaching a breaking point.

Through media channels including digital, social, events, influencers and out-of-home advertisements, messages from *Take Space to Pause* normalize conversations surrounding mental health and negative emotions, help teens recognize early warning signs of an overactive stress response, and increase positive help-seeking behaviors among California youth ages 13 to 17. Priority audiences included youth from communities disproportionately impacted by behavioral health challenges, including Black and African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian and Pacific Islander, Latino, and LGBTQ. The strategy was inclusive of youth with disabilities, justice-impacted and foster-involved youth and those living in rural communities.



Take Space to Pause ad in convenience store.
Photo Credit: CDPH Office of Health Equity

Although the campaign was primarily digital, the effort also engaged youth as ambassadors to share resources in schools and community settings, including at events with the LA Dodgers and the KIIS-FM Wango Tango Music Festival.

The campaign featured an interactive website in English and Spanish to help individuals "**Plan Your Pause**," a method to develop personalized coping strategies and find local and specialized support services. Through January 2026, over 12,700 personalized Pause Plans have been completed on the website.

Take Space to Pause also featured dedicated efforts to reach boys and young men, as well as LGBTQ individuals. For LGBTQ communities specifically, tailored messaging under the moniker This is Me was developed with input from the LGBTQ community, and the campaign maintained a strong presence at Pride events across the state, including events in Chico, Sacramento, San Diego, Stockton and West Hollywood.

As of April 2026, messaging from *Take Space to Pause* reached more than 1.1 billion impressions and 126 million video completions. Partners contributed 379,000 engagements (e.g., shares, likes).

As compared to youth who were not exposed to the campaign, those who were showed meaningful improvements, including significantly lower mental health stigma, feeling more confident in managing their own well-being and being more aware of available mental health resources. They were also more likely to seek out information on handling stress and emotions, used healthy coping strategies more often and relied less on unhealthy ways of managing stress.

12,700+

PERSONALIZED PAUSE PLANS COMPLETED ON THE *PLAN YOUR PAUSE* WEBSITE

"I went through a lot of stress and worries about succeeding or making my family proud. I put these expectations and negative emotions onto myself saying that I'm not doing enough and I work harder and harder 'til burnout … Instead of suppressing, we should be taking a moment to activate our body's calming system and this really helped me just be present and enjoy spending time with family and friends." - **Caleb Jo**

Community Alliances for Local Impact

Because healing is rooted in culture, CDPH worked hand-in-hand with community and tribal organizations to support them in crafting stigma-reduction and help-seeking messages that reflect the voices, languages and traditions of the communities they serve.

1.1 BILLION+

IMPRESSIONS REACHED FROM *TAKE SPACE TO PAUSE* MESSAGING

With $25 million in support from CDPH, and guided by core values (including advancing equity and centering youth), 28 partner organizations focused on improving health in five priority populations: Black and African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian and Pacific Islander, Latino, and LGBTQ communities, with special considerations made to transition-age youth, persons with disabilities and/or those living in rural areas.

Youth-led design produced creative, culturally grounded formats — such as comic books, podcasts and art contests — that encouraged conversation, peer sharing and referrals to care. On-the-ground engagement paired with social media strengthened access and follow-through by linking families to nearby supports. School and local partnerships expanded reach, integrated health literacy into existing activities and helped sustain efforts beyond single events.

A strong network of peer learning and continuous coordination between the programs helped statewide and local campaigns to quickly test ideas and solve problems together. By collecting and sharing data, communities were able to refine their strategies and create more effective, community driven messages that advanced equity and led to real, measurable improvements.



From "Captain Empath: Against Mental Illness" by El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center.

> "I actually grew up in the community I'm working in. I feel like having that firsthand experience — I know the struggles, I know the culture — it's definitely healing to be able to give back. It's an amazing experience. Being part of this work feels extremely personal and meaningful — it's not just a job for me. It's about giving back to a place that has shaped me — both personally and professionally."
>
> – MAURICIO R., SAN YSIDRO HEALTH

Living Beyond Adverse Childhood Experiences

The *Live Beyond* ACEs Campaign launched in May of 2024 to increase awareness of the health impacts of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and toxic stress. Funded by the Office of the California Surgeon General, the statewide public awareness campaign targeted two priority populations in California: youth and young adults ages 16 to 25, and caregivers of youth ages 8 to 16.

Following its launch, *Live Beyond* worked with Valkrae, an online streamer, YouTuber and podcaster, to more authentically connect the often complex topic of ACEs to the real experiences of young people online. **Her personal realizations** helped normalize conversations about ACEs and mental health, reinforced that asking for help is a sign of strength, and encouraged protective factors like connection and self-care.

More than 20 youth with lived experienced advised the campaign, helping co-create messages and resources that resonate with their peers and honor their cultural identities. Youth curated Spotify playlists and booklists featuring Native artists and authors and helped design stress-busting tools rooted in traditional and cultural practice.

"These [stress busters for *Live Beyond*] are actually pretty cool. I do so many of these in my day to day life. Now it makes sense why I go to ceremony, to heal or to drink tea, and to make things like baskets. It's cool to know that those are ways to help heal yourself. It's not that I just want to do it, there's a meaning behind it."
– Love, Youth Leader



Valkrae, online streamer, YouTuber and influencer for the Live Beyond Campaign
Photo Credit: Say Little ProductionsCredit: San Ysidro Health



Mauricio promotes the youth-created local level campaign, Silence Isn't Strength.
Photo Credit: San Ysidro Health

> What fuels me now is the children. I like to help the community, because I see them going through the same stuff that I went through. I want to be the outlet like the ones who helped me.

– BIG 50



Live Beyond partnered with Drew League, a professional-amateur basketball league that supports youth and young adults of South Central Los Angeles. Drew League players and father-son duo **Big 50 & his son Tyrone Riley IV** talked about overcoming ACEs and how Drew League, basketball, mentorship and stress management tools have helped them reach new heights.

Messages and resources from the campaign were present in nearly 200 events across the state, including rural and urban regions. Engagement spanned local library programs, cultural festivals commemorating Lunar New Year and Dia de Los Muertos, Drew League basketball games (as highlighted above), Pride festivals, and Native/Tribal events, bringing *Live Beyond*'s healing messages directly to communities. These events and activations were staffed by paid youth advisors and ambassadors for the campaign, Californians who have experienced ACEs and toxic stress sharing their healing journeys and stress-mitigating strategies with the goal of forging connections, building community, and inspiring others who may need support.

As of December 2025, the campaign garnered more than 1.3 billion impressions with ads on billboards, concerts via Live Nation, across digital platforms including social media and Spotify, and more.

In the 10 months following campaign launch, *Live Beyond* **reached just over one in four California youth and young adults**, with 60 to 70% of those reached reporting that the ads motivated them to learn more about ACEs and healing strategies. Notably, caregivers' basic ACEs knowledge increased by more than 50%, and an additional 276,000 California caregivers recognized that self-care strategies effectively mitigate the effects of ACEs.

The campaign resonated throughout California, including Shasta County where rates of ACEs are higher than statewide averages. "I think the most important thing is to have positive relationships and belonging. Find ways to be supported, have community and find, hopefully, those people to help us feel like we belong," said Jessica Mua, Shasta County Health and Human Services Agency Community Education Specialist.

The *Live Beyond* campaign was one component of a larger effort to mitigate ACEs and toxic stress across California. It follows the campaign of the California Children and Families Commission (First 5 California), **Stronger Starts**, which targeted parents, caregivers and families with children ages 0 to 5. The campaign also collaborated with **ACEs Aware**, a first-in-the nation initiative to screen patients for ACEs. While ACEs Aware focuses on equipping providers with training, screening tools and clinical protocols, *Live Beyond* extended that work into communities — building shared language, reducing stigma and encouraging families and youth to seek support.

Learn more about Shasta County's efforts to raise awareness with *Live Beyond* →

50% INCREASE

IN CAREGIVERS' BASIC ACES KNOWLEDGE IN 10 MONTHS



Luis, a Live Beyond Youth Ambassador from Ventura, spending time in nature.
Photo Credit: Live Beyond ACEs Campaign



California youth share personal messages as part of the Never a Bother campaign.
Photo Credit: CDPH Office of Suicide Prevention

Letting youth know they are Never a Bother

At the outset, Californians were clear that any messaging on suicide prevention must go beyond awareness to: (1) equip young people and those who care about them with language that makes hard conversations possible, (2) increase feelings of worth and belonging, and (3) provide clear resources for immediate support.

The *Never a Bother* campaign, administered by CDPH's Office of Suicide Prevention, was built upon these three principles. The effort included two interconnected components: a statewide media campaign and 33 organization partners working to support youth-led, community-driven suicide prevention efforts. The media campaign and community partners coordinated efforts to maximize impact among focus populations and communities throughout California.

A critical component of the campaign's creation and ongoing development was the involvement of a Youth Advisory Board (YAB) composed of five young people from across the state, ages 15-22 years old. YAB Members acted as campaign consultants, and received training on suicide prevention, safe messaging and communications strategy to set the foundation for the type of material they would help develop.

"The most impactful part of participating on YAB has been getting my message and perspective across and being able to support this campaign. I strongly believe in this cause, and being able to provide my feedback and support has meant the world to me!" – YAB Member



The campaign partnered with Grammy-award winning musician, philanthropist and mental health advocate Megan Thee Stallion to develop and share campaign content.



Never a Bother 2024 Summer Challenge Winner
Photo Credit: CDPH Office of Suicide Prevention

The campaign partnered with Grammy-award winning musician, philanthropist and mental health advocate Megan Thee Stallion to share her story and promote the campaign — garnering more than 6.6 million impressions across Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and YouTube. It also collaborated with the Coachella Music Festival to share *Never a Bother* resources in their mental health space. Youth from grantee organizations created content on-site at Coachella that helped share trusted resources and messages of hope and support.

Community partnerships reinforcing messages of connection and support

Thirty-three community and Tribal organizations partnered with *Never a Bother* to lead suicide prevention efforts grounded in culture and community. Grantees engaged youth in media co-creation, acted as trusted messengers in their local communities and implemented local youth suicide prevention strategies that reinforced campaign guidance. Over 400 youth were involved in the development of *Never a Bother*, which launched in March 2024 with **a resource website**, outreach materials and media throughout the state.

Through this effort, San Bernardino-based **Rainbow Pride Youth Alliance** (RPYA) launched Suicide Prevention, Education, and Knowledge (i.e., S.P.E.A.K) to empower young people to take an active role in their own mental health and advocate for their peers in community settings.

Lucius credits the skills he learned through S.P.E.A.K. with helping them save a friend's life. Neptune describes a similar ripple effect in their community, calling it a "butterfly effect" — where one act of support leads to another, creating a growing network of care and awareness. By fostering connections and sharing mental health resources, they've empowered others to step up and support those who are struggling. "It's the domino effect of having the tools and the knowledge that I have," Neptune says of the chain reaction that has sparked meaningful conversations about mental health and the importance of seeking and providing help.

Another community partner, **Instituto Familiar de la Raza**, worked to enhance mental health for Hispanic/Latino youth across Alameda, San Francisco and San Mateo counties through cultural arts interventions and proactive suicide prevention strategies. Their program, Promesa, emphasized cultural responsiveness and resilience building through community outreach, mental health stigma reduction, and psycho-social workshops to (1) support youth in combatting internal/external stigma related to mental health issues and (2) increase help-seeking behaviors such as accessing therapy, identifying a support system and recognizing suicide warning signs in themselves and their peers.

> "Being able to tell someone what you need can be one of the hardest things for a person to do … [and so working on the *Never a Bother* campaign] has been wonderful. I love being able to put myself out there as someone advocating for this."
>
> – RAGNO

Learn more about how queer youth are referring support in their communities →



Nancy, a parent who participated with the Live Beyond ACEs campaign, with her daughter.
Photo Credit: Live Beyond ACEs Campaign

El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center implemented a youth-led, trauma-informed, culturally responsive program in Riverside and San Bernardino counties to strengthen resilience, improve self-esteem and empower youth through constructive engagement in schools and communities. The program's cohort of Youth Peer Support Specialists worked alongside El Sol's Community Health Workers to directly engage youth in suicide prevention outreach and education, as well as tailor and share suicide prevention messaging for their local community. By recognizing, leveraging and enhancing their strengths, El Sol helped youth more effectively cope with mental health concerns.

Demonstrating outcomes in awareness and education efforts to prevent suicide

In its first year, the *Never a Bother* campaign garnered over 1.6 billion impressions and distributed more than 1,500 toolkits containing educational materials. In addition, grantees shared over 4,530 suicide prevention-related social media messages across their collective 96,000 followers, while also adapting and sharing messaging through local media channels. Through local program efforts, grantee partners also offered over 5,130 activities that supported 114,000+ direct interactions with youth and caregivers.

A statewide survey found that more than three out of every four respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the campaign enhanced their understanding of suicide prevention, helped them recognize warning signs, increased awareness of key resources such as the 988 Lifeline and Teen Line, and strengthened their confidence in supporting others. Two out of every three respondents also agreed or strongly agreed that the campaign "increased my coping skills." After exposure to the *Never a Bother* campaign, **74% of respondents expressed interest in learning more about youth suicide prevention**, indicating it is prompting curiosity and engagement around the topic.

These results suggest that the effort is improving awareness and use of mental health services among youth and that community partners effectively supported youth in developing healthier coping skills.

> "Working in the suicide prevention program has been a new and deeply meaningful experience for me. Remember, even the smallest act of kindness can make a big difference in someone's life. Let's keep looking out for one another and spreading hope wherever we go."
>
> – EL SOL NEIGHBORHOOD EDUCATIONAL CENTER STAFF



Youth and staff with the Instituto Familiar de la Raza share Never a Bother messaging at Carnaval San Francisco. Credit: CDPH Office of Suicide Prevention

CHANGING CONVERSATIONS *AT A GLANCE*

Take Space to Pause is improving mental health literacy and reducing stigma

Nearly half *of surveyed youth ages 13 to 17 years in California were aware of Take Space to Pause.*

Never a Bother is building awareness of youth suicide warning signs and how to get support

Two of every three *respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Never a Bother increased coping skills.*

Live Beyond is increasing understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), toxic stress, and mitigation strategies

Caregivers' knowledge of ACEs ***increased by more than 50 percent*** *through Live Beyond.*

All campaigns were developed by youth for youth. In total, they campaigns garnered

4 BILLION
impressions.

4 billion openings to start a conversation.

More than **60 community** and tribal organizations partnered with these efforts, conducting culturally focused activities resulting in more than

470,000
interactions with community members.

More than

12,700

personalized Pause Plans were created.

Collaboration and coordination among child-serving agencies is essential for a resilient behavioral health ecosystem. Prevention efforts fail when agencies operate in silos, leading to fragmented care and missed opportunities to amplify resources and intervene early.

REIMAGINING THE ECOSYSTEM OF CARE

Youth, CBOs, state leaders and more gather to discuss CYBHI and continued support of youth at the CYBHI CYF Network Convening.
Photo Credit: Hoops 4 Justice

By supporting alignment of reporting practices, funding streams and data systems across sectors (e.g., healthcare, social services, education, juvenile justice, etc). California is working to create a unified approach to ensure individuals receive comprehensive, coordinated support.

In times of crisis, strong coordination becomes even more critical. Rapid response requires effective and efficient communication between many entities, including emergency services, mental health providers, law enforcement, schools and community organizations. Structural reforms that establish shared protocols, interoperable data platforms, and joint training programs enable agencies to act as a cohesive network rather than isolated entities. This alignment aims to better serve individuals in crisis and prevent other crises from occurring, including **suicide clusters**.



Mike Lombardo and James Soward present on Transforming Together efforts at 2025 The Wellness Together Conference Photo Credit: Wellness Together

Transforming Together

When systems are fragmented, professionals find themselves spending more time navigating obstacles than meeting the needs of those they serve. A school counselor may scramble to locate mental health support for a student. A probation officer might be unsure who else is working with the same young person at the same time. A pediatrician could be treating a child without insight into resources to address housing instability.

To address this, California launched **Transforming Together** (T2), a multi-year initiative to demonstrate how counties can align, integrate and expand behavioral health services and create a more effective ecosystem of care for children, youth and families. With support from San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, a Collaborative Leadership Working Group — comprising leaders in community schools, behavioral health, community engagement and county governance from state agencies, county offices and service providers — is providing implementation support, tools and technical assistance to teams from the four T2 demonstration counties.

In Imperial County — one of the initiative's demonstration sites, alongside Humboldt, Alameda, and Fresno counties — youth-serving agencies are working together to build a shared, tiered system of support that meets children and youth where they are. Education, behavioral health, public health, child welfare, managed care plans, the Regional Center, the Sheriff's Office, Probation, the Native community, and community-based partners have aligned their efforts around a common understanding of prevention, early intervention and more intensive supports.

With support from Transforming Together, Imperial County's Interagency Leadership Team began mapping and coordinating supports across school and community settings, focusing on universal, prevention-oriented services. The teams are also designing shared referral pathways to ensure children and youth receive timely, appropriate services without duplication or delay. Partners are building a tiered approach that clarifies roles, strengthens communication and creates pathways across agencies.

"Transforming Together is changing what a coordinated system of care looks like in Imperial County. We are bringing together leaders from juvenile justice, health, social services, education and other child-serving systems to build something stronger and more aligned for our youth and families. This work matters because our families cannot wait. When we work across systems with trust and shared responsibility, we create real access, real support, and real hope for our community." – Armando López, Director of District and Community School Support, Imperial County Office of Education

"Engaging families and youth in decision making is supported by decades of research; it is foundational to building strong, responsive systems of care. At the same time, agencies may fall short — and risk appearing disingenuous — when they 'engage' community and family voices, particularly those who have been marginalized, without providing the support needed to participate meaningfully in these often complicated processes and without compensating them for time taken away from work or other commitments." – Chapter 2, Transforming Together Implementation Guide

Read more from the Transforming Together Implementation Guide →

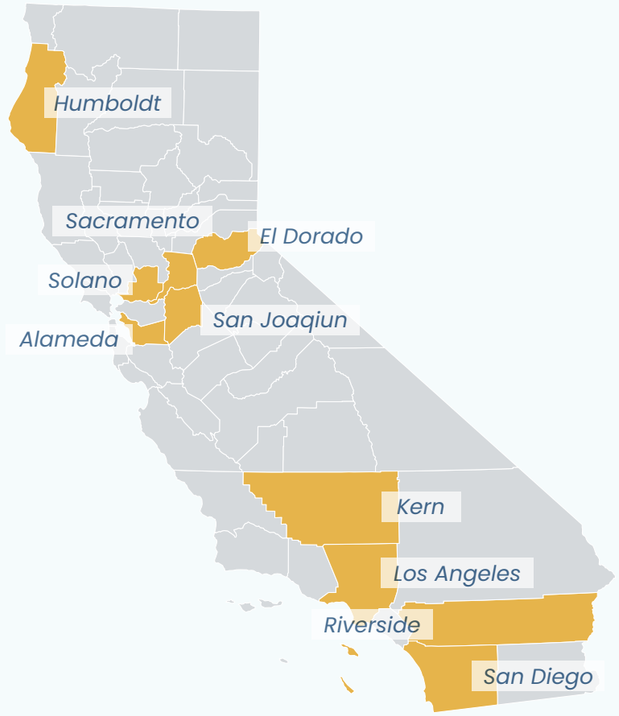
Youth Suicide Prevention and Response Network

Through CYBHI, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) launched a pilot program to address a growing concern about youth suicide across California and support counties to build a coordinated system of care for youth following a suicide or suicide attempt. The effort focused on creating systems that could quickly identify and address crises while ensuring long-term support for affected youth and families. Ten pilot counties — Alameda, El Dorado, Humboldt, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, Sacramento, San Diego, San Joaquin, and Solano — were chosen based on higher-than-average rates of youth suicide and self-harm incidents, as well as geographic diversity and other strategic considerations.

As part of the $35 million effort, the pilot program focused on (1) improving systems for real-time reporting of suicide attempts and deaths among youth and (2) enhancing the quality, consistency, and reach of crisis response services delivered to youth and their families. Participating counties assessed their existing infrastructure, identified gaps, and developed models for reporting suicide-related events.

Counties participated in structured activities to create system maps, visually displaying how youth move through crisis pathways in their communities, schools and healthcare systems. These maps then laid the foundation for pilot counties to enhance or develop 150 partnerships across a wide range of sectors, including education, medical and behavioral health providers, law enforcement, and first responders. For example, in Solano and Los Angeles Counties, health officials engaged with multiple community organizations that work with youth involved in systems (e.g., child welfare system, juvenile justice system, etc.) to strengthen support, since research suggests these youth face significantly higher suicide risks than their peers.

PILOT COUNTIES FOR YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE NETWORK



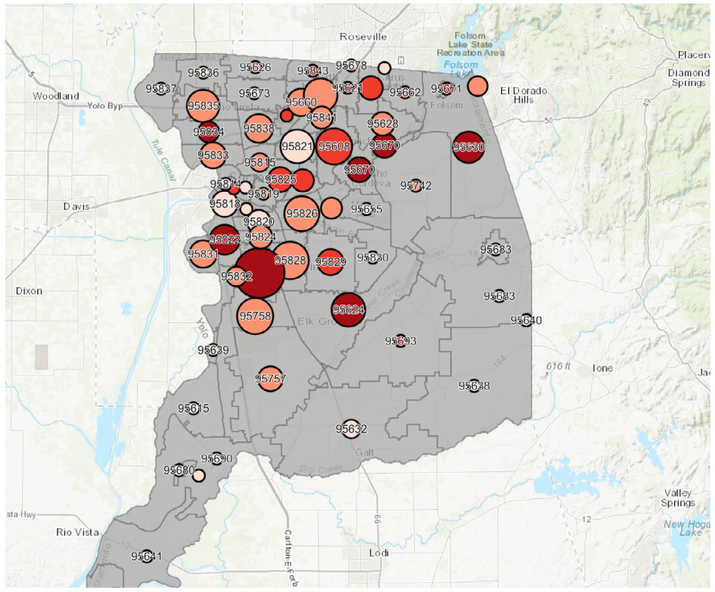
150 PARTNERSHIPS

ENHANCED OR DEVELOPED BY PILOT COUNTIES ACROSS A WIDE RANGE OF SECTORS

Sacramento County Public Health leveraged the program to put data into action by producing a suicide prevention data dashboard and email alert system. The dashboard displays near-real-time data from emergency department (ED) visits for suicidal ideation and attempted suicide, stratified by patient sex and race/ethnicity for youth and adults for the last three months. The dashboard also visualizes data on maps of the county by ZIP code. In addition to the dashboard, the team sends out alerts to other county agencies when spikes in suicide-related ED visits are observed in a ZIP code. This information is in turn leveraged by care providers providing services and support to youth and young adults. Efforts like this can **help to prevent suicide clusters** — a group of suicides, suicide attempts or self-harm events that occur closer together in time and space than would normally be expected in a given community, and known to occur among young people and in schools — by ensuring resources and services are rapidly deployed to areas where they are urgently needed.

People power

While structural changes set the foundation for a stronger behavioral health system, momentum also comes from passionate people making a difference every day. Teachers, clinicians, advocates and community leaders are innovating, collaborating and responding to needs in ways that matter—



Sacramento County's Suicide Prevention Data Dashboard provides near real-time data from emergency departments about suicide to highlight geographic hot spots for care providers supporting young people.

sometimes through sweeping initiatives, sometimes through personal actions. Together, these efforts remind us that transformation is about systems and the human drive to create hope and healing.

In Yuba County, efforts to improve behavioral health for young people have grown stronger through collaboration between many partners, including the county's Public Health Officer Dr. Phuong Luu. Dr. Luu and her team have worked closely with education partners to expand access to school-based mental health resources by creating wellness centers and integrating Certified Wellness Coaches to enhance prevention and early-intervention supports on campus.

"We all really care about children and youth, but sometimes educational partners, they're [speaking] a language that healthcare partners don't understand. So, I try to educate myself on both languages so that I can be that bridge — that translator." – Phuong Luu, MD, MHS, FACP, Public Health Officer for Yuba and Sutter Counties

As part of CYBHI's Children, Youth, and Family (CYF) Network, individuals from SistaBees and 30+ other organizations helped to inform and disseminate resources from CYBHI to more than 73,000 community members at more than 500 outreach events.

Watch Yuba County Embracing New Ways to Support Student Mental Health →

> SistaBees is definitely a safe space. In my community, there is not many places for girls like me to go and come together with each other. When I joined, I made more friends, learned how to communicate and it helped with my mental health too. I can go to them when I need anything, they've always been there.

– ERIONI, A HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR IN SACRAMENTO, FOUND THAT SUPPORT FROM THE SISTABEES



Members of Sistabees gather at Camp S'more, a free annual retreat for sistas ages 13-18.
Photo Credit: SistaBees

CYBHI Legacy Report 2026

WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

CYBHI
Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative

WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

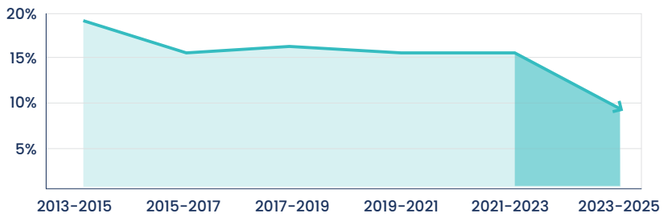
CYBHI has accelerated a generational shift in how California understands, supports and invests in the well-being of young people. This work has laid a durable foundation — new care models, stronger community partnerships, expanded workforce capacity, youth-centered digital tools and a statewide culture that encourages reaching out, connecting and asking for help.



Youth selfie at the launch of the Take Space to Pause Campaign

Students who reported seriously considering attempting suicide in the past 12 months

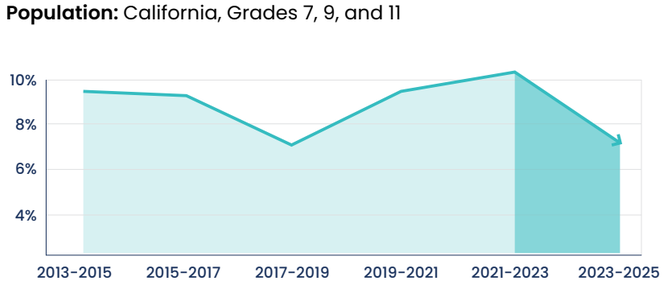
Population: California, Grades 9 and 11



Data Source: CHKS Biennial Survey

Students with school absences due to mental health issues

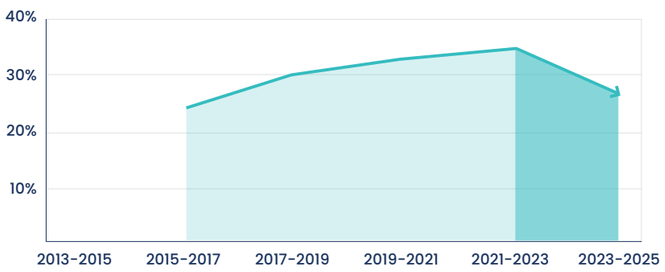
Population: California, Grades 7, 9, and 11



Data Source: CHKS Biennial Survey

Students who experienced chronic sadness/hopelessness in the past 12 months

Population: California, Grade 7



Data Source: CHKS Biennial Survey

No matter how comprehensive the reforms or how inspiring the efforts are, they mean little if outcomes for youth do not improve. Policies, programs and partnerships are only as valuable as the real-world impact they create. Success must be measured not by the number of initiatives launched, but by tangible changes in lives saved and futures strengthened. Without improved outcomes, even the most ambitious strategies fall short of their purpose.

Recent data indicates a promising trend in the wellbeing of California youth. Over the past several years, young people are reporting greater optimism and life satisfaction, and decreased sadness and suicidality. Schools are reporting improving attendance and decreasing suspension rates.

While trends may be headed in the right direction, clinical outcomes data for recent years is not yet available, and it is widely recognized that young people still experience significant challenges and that outcomes differ based on where they live, how they look and who they love.

To better understand these trends, CYBHI partnered with **Mathematica** to conduct an initiative-wide evaluation. Individuals can learn more about progress through a CYBHI data dashboard, interim evaluation report, and special reports assessing implementation and outcomes in nine California counties. Forthcoming reports include additional county-level evaluations and an initiative-wide comprehensive evaluation, as well as focused reports on populations that experience disparities, the CYBHI Fee Schedule program, and Certified Wellness Coaches.

At the beginning of the evaluation period, Alameda, Fresno, Humboldt, Imperial, Los Angeles, Monterey, Shasta, Ventura and Yolo counties all faced critical workforce shortages, gaps in crisis and residential care, and limited access to culturally and linguistically responsive services, particularly in rural areas and among underserved populations.

"CYBHI investments are helping counties begin to close these gaps. As of fall 2024, counties were attracting and retaining behavioral health providers through community-based organization behavioral health workforce incentives, hiring bilingual and culturally representative staff using Certified Wellness Coach employer support grants, and expanding school-based behavioral health services through SBHIP and the CYBHI Fee Schedule. Funding through CYBHI workstreams further enabled counties to tailor school-based wellness and social and emotional learning supports to meet the needs of Indigenous youth and other marginalized groups." – From the CYBHI Cross County Insights Report

Learn more at the CYBHI Evaluation Hub →

The foundation is laid

Advancements made through CYBHI were designed to be the building blocks of a stronger, more responsive behavioral health ecosystem for California. As we enter the 2026-2027 fiscal year, landmark reforms and investments include the CYBHI Fee Schedule Program, Certified Wellness Coach profession, the Medi-Cal Dyadic Benefit, digital services through Soluna and BrightLife Kids, and provider supports through Cal-MAP, which continue to operate and grow under current operational frameworks.

These efforts and other CYBHI workstreams are supported, if not augmented, through powerful, complementary efforts coming online. The Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA), which begins implementation in July 2026, provides sustained investments to help youth and families access services close to home. Fifty-one percent of funding for early intervention and prevention efforts under BHSA is dedicated to support individuals under the age 26 years. The Behavioral Health Community-Based Organized Networks of Equitable Care and Treatment (BH-CONNECT) Demonstration expands access to timely, coordinated, youth-centered care. California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) and Medi-Cal modernization are embedding whole-person care and prevention into the core of California's health system. The California Community Schools Partnership Program continues to support implementation of integrated student supports, collaborative leadership models and active family and community engagement. From school-based partnerships to community-driven campaigns, county-based innovations are also strengthening support networks in every region of the state.

Under Governor Newsom's leadership, more than $14 billion has been invested to improve access and quality across mental health and substance use services. Together, these initiatives and other efforts form the foundation upon which efforts continue to grow and evolve with California's children, youth and families. The structures, relationships and systems strengthened through CYBHI have become embedded across state agencies, counties, schools, health plans, CBOs and digital platforms. California strives not only to build programs, but rather to transform the conditions that shape lifelong well-being.



California youth share positive messages as part of the Never a Bother campaign.
Photo Credit: CDPH Office of Suicide Prevention





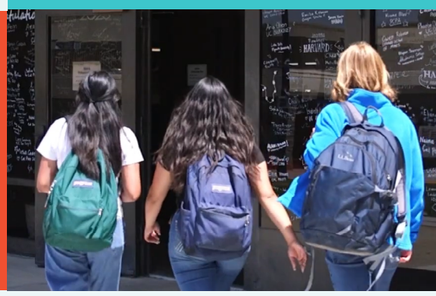



As we enter this next chapter, the vision remains clear: a California where every child and young person can access support when and how they need it; where prevention and early intervention are the norm; where families are met with empathy and culturally attuned care; and where youth continue to guide what comes next.



The foundation is strong, the partnerships are enduring and the commitment is unwavering. **California's behavioral health system is positioned to support this generation — and the next — to grow, thrive and live full, healthy lives.**



CYBHI Legacy Report 2026

GLOSSARY & APPENDIX

CYBHI
Children and Youth
Behavioral Health Initiative

GLOSSARY

ACEs	Adverse Childhood Experiences
BBA	Brief Behavioral Activation
BHCIP	Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program
BH-CONNECT	Behavioral Health Community-Based Organized Networks of Equitable Care and Treatment
BHSA	Behavioral Health Services Act
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
Cal-AIM	California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal
CalHHS	California Health and Human Services Agency
CalHOPE	California Hope, Opportunity, Perseverance, & Empowerment Initiative
Cal-MAP	California Child and Adolescent Mental Health Access Portal
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CDE	California Department of Education
CDPH OHE	California Department of Public Health Office of Health Equity
CDPH OSH	California Department of Public Health Office of School Health
CDPH OSP	California Department of Public Health Office of Suicide Prevention
CDEP	Community-Defined Evidence Practices
CMI	Child Mind Institute
COE	County Office of Education
CoP / CoPs	Community (Communities) of Practice
COST	Coordination of Services Team
CWC	Certified Wellness Coach
CYBHI	Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative
CYFN	Children and Youth Family Network
DHCS	California Department of Healthcare Services
DMHC	California Department of Managed Healthcare
EBP	Evidence-Based Practices
EMA	Ecological Momentary Assessment
EPSDT	Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment
ESSER	Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
HCAI	Department of Healthcare Access and Information
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act

GLOSSARY

HPI	Healthy Places Index
IHE	Institution of Higher Education
JSN	Justice Serving Network
LB	Live Beyond ACEs Campaign
LEA	Local Educational Agency
LEA-BOP	Local Educational Agency Billing Option Program
MHSA	Mental Health Services Act
MHSSA	Mental Health Student Services Act
MRT	Mobile Response Team
MRW Grants	Mindfulness, Resilience, and Well-Being Grants
MTSS	Multi-Tiered System of Supports
NAB	Never a Bother Campaign
NFP	Nurse-Family Partnership
OSG	Office of the California Surgeon General
OYCR	Office of Youth and Community Restoration
PBIS	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
PECE	Psychiatric Education Capacity Expansion Grant
PSS	Peer Support Specialist
SBHC	School-Based Health Center
SBHIP	Student Behavioral Health Incentive Program
SCOW	Schools as Centers of Wellness
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
SLPG	School-Linked Partnership and Capacity Grants
SMAA	School-Based Medi-Cal Administrative Activities
SSI	Single Session Intervention
SWECE	Social Work Education Capacity Expansion Grant
TK	Transitional Kindergarten
Triple P	Positive Parenting Program
TSTP	Take Space to Pause Campaign
UCAAN	UCSF-UCLA ACEs Aware Family Resilience Network
YAB	Youth Advisory Board
YMHA	Youth Mental Health Academy

APPENDIX

The following is a list of major workstreams supported through CYBHI.

** = The partners listed supported program administration; the list is not comprehensive and does not include subcontracted entities.*

*** = Funding includes CYBHI-specific allocations, including multi-year allocations, as of March 2026. Future year allocations, including FY 26-27, are subject to change. Some programs include additional braided funding sources.*

**** = Timelines are specific to activities funded through CYBHI. The availability of new resources beyond the timeline listed per program may vary. Also, some workstreams continue efforts through other funding sources. Future projections are subject to change. See program links for more information.*

WORKSTREAM NAME	Scaling Best Practices (EBP/ CDEP) Grant Program	Student Behavioral Health Incentive Program	CalHOPE Schools	CalHOPE Student Supports
DESCRIPTION	Five grant rounds scaling 40+ evidence-based and 75 community-defined practices	Increasing behavioral health services and collaboration between Medi-Cal managed care plans and school districts	Free mental health and wellness resources for schools	Social emotional learning (SEL) tools and communities of practice, as well as free mental health tools and resources for schools
STATE LEAD(S) AND CONTRACTED PARTNER(S)*	**DHCS** with California Institute for Behavioral Health Solutions	**DHCS**, with Guidehouse	**DHCS**, with Media Solutions	**DHCS**, with Sacramento COE
FUNDING ALLOCATION**	$381M	$389M	$7.9M	$45M
TIMELINE***	Dec 2022 to present	Jan 2022 to Dec 2024	Aug 2022 to June 2025	Feb 2022 to June 2024
KEY RESULTS	• **465** organizations awarded grants • **7K+** staff trained in EBP/CDEPs, serving 34K+ individuals as of Fall 2025 • **852K+** individuals reached through outreach, engagement and screening	• **1.3M+** students reached, including 800K Medi-Cal beneficiaries • **147** interventions conducted across all 58 counties • **280+** new school-linked wellness centers and spaces established	• **79K+** visits to the website • **63K+** sessions engaging with one or more resources • **16K+** returning users for multiple sessions	• **56** county teams participated in statewide communities of practice; 79K+ visits to the CalHOPE Schools site • **350+** school sites supported to intensify SEL supports, reaching 367K+ youth • **26K+** youth engaged through Friday Night Live chapters
LEARN MORE	Evidence-Based Practice & Community-Defined Evidence Practice Grants	Student Behavioral Heath Incentive Program	CalHOPE Schools	CalHOPE SEL

APPENDIX (CONTINUED)

WORKSTREAM NAME	Mindfulness, Resilience, and Well-being Supports	School-Linked Partnership and Capacity Grants	CYBHI Fee Schedule Program	High School Peer-to-Peer Pilot Demonstration
DESCRIPTION	Grants for wellness, resilience and social emotional learning (SEL) supports	Grants for public TK-12 schools to support readiness for the CYBHI Fee Schedule program	Reimbursement program for behavioral healthcare delivered by public schools, colleges and affiliated providers	Support for high schools to pilot student peer-to-peer programs
STATE LEAD(S) AND CONTRACTED PARTNER(S)*	**DHCS**, with Sacramento COE	**DHCS**, with Sacramento and Santa Clara COEs	**DHCS** and **DMHC**, with Carelon Behavioral Health	**DHCS**, with The Children's Partnership
FUNDING ALLOCATION**	$65M	$400M	$65M	$8M
TIMELINE***	Mar 2023 to Dec 2025	Jan 2024 to Dec 2028	Jan 2024 to present	June 2022 - June 2027
KEY RESULTS	• **58** counties established MOUs to scale social emotional learning • **1.2K+** educators from 347 districts took SEL coursework from UC Berkeley	• **26** Communities of Practice held, attended by all 58 COEs • **97** office hour sessions held to provide technical assistance • **32** COEs submitted claims through the CYBHI Fee Schedule program, as of Spring 2026	• **230K+** care services reimbursed as of June 2026 • **48.8K+** students receiving services reimbursed through the program • **190+** schools districts, colleges and affiliated providers submitting claims	• **8** high schools participating, with 140 students serving as peer support leaders • **936** students used peer-to-peer services at least once across sites in the first year • **96%** of students felt better after utilizing peer services
LEARN MORE	Mindfulness, Resilience, and Well-being Supports for Children, Youth, and Parents	School-Linked Partnerships and Capacity Grants	CYBHI Fee Schedule program	Peer-to-Peer California High School Pilot Demonstrations

APPENDIX (CONTINUED)

WORKSTREAM NAME	Soluna	BrightLife Kids	California Child and Adolescent Mental Health Access Portal (Cal-MAP)	Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program
DESCRIPTION	Free, virtual behavioral health platform for youth ages 13-25 years old	Free, virtual behavioral health platform for children 0-12 years, parents, and caregivers	Free portal for provider-to-provider consultations, on-demand education, patient resources and care navigation	Round 4 of capital investment to expand care infrastructure, focused on children, youth, pregnant and postpartum women and families
STATE LEAD(S) AND CONTRACTED PARTNER(S)*	**DHCS** with Kooth	**DHCS** with BrightLine	**DHCS** with University of California, San Francisco	**DHCS** with Advocates for Human Potential, Inc., BHCIP administrative entity
FUNDING ALLOCATION**	$271M	$227M	$60.1M	$480.5M
TIMELINE***	June 2023 to present	June 2023 to present	Dec 2023 to present	Dec 2022 to June 2027
KEY RESULTS	• **150K+** registered users and 53K+ coaching sessions as of January 2026 • **85%** of coaching users reported having at least one need met in a single session • **50%** of surveyed users engaging in behavioral healthcare for the first time	• **250K** children enrolled and 58K+ coaching sessions as of January 2026 • **93%** of parents and caregivers reported improvements in their child's behavioral health • **77%** engaging in behavioral healthcare for the first time through the CYBHI Fee Schedule program, as of Spring 2026	• **4.7K+** care providers engaged, from 53 counties through February 2026 • **7.4K+** care consultations supporting 4.6K+ youth • **53%** of consults managed within primary care without in-person specialist referral	• **50** infrastructure projects supporting 69 new or expanded BH facilities • **534** inpatient/residential beds created • **8.3K+** outpatient treatment slots created, projected to serve 1M individuals annually
LEARN MORE	Get started with Soluna	Get started with BrightLife Kids	Get started with Cal-MAP	Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program

APPENDIX (CONTINUED)

WORKSTREAM NAME	Next Generational Digital Therapeutics	Positive Parenting, Thriving Kids	Scaling Dyadic Services Grant Program	Youth Suicide Reporting and Crisis Response Pilot
DESCRIPTION	Digital supports including Mirror (guided journaling), Kandoo (brief behavioral activation therapy), and Curious (research platform)	Free video series and training resources to strengthen parenting skills and support family well-being	Training, technical assistance and grant support to implement and scale the dyadic services benefit	Support for 10 pilot counties to build more timely and coordinated systems of care for youth following a suicide and suicide attempt
STATE LEAD(S) AND CONTRACTED PARTNER(S)*	**DHCS**, with the Child Mind Institute	**DHCS**, with The Child Mind Institute	**DHCS**, with University of California, San Francisco	**CDPH**, with Center for Applied Research Solutions and University of California, Los Angeles
FUNDING ALLOCATION**	$75M	$15M	$35M in grant program, $511M as Medi-Cal benefit	$35M
TIMELINE***	Dec 2022 to June 2026	Dec 2022 to June 2025	Dec 2025 to Feb 2029	June 2022 to June 2025
KEY RESULTS	• **24K+** journal entries logged in Mirror as of December 2025 • **20+** clinicians enrolled in Kandoo open trial supporting 28 patients • **270+** users on Curious developing tools such as Single-Session Interventions	• **20** topics covered, including the most common parenting challenges • **53K+** views within California, through November 2025 • **9K+** downloads of videos and resource guides	• **20** organizations to be supported with grants and technical assistance to scale dyadic services • **1** statewide dyadic services best practices toolkit to be developed	• **10 counties** developed system maps to identify gaps and opportunities to strengthen existing suicide response system • **8 counties** improved youth suicide and self-harm monitoring through enhanced data collection • **150K+** strategic partnerships established to bridge gaps in crisis intervention
LEARN MORE	Mirror, Kandoo, and Curious	Positive Parenting, Thriving Kids	Learn more about Dyadic Services	CDPH Office of Suicide Prevention

APPENDIX (CONTINUED)

WORKSTREAM NAME	Never a Bother	Take Space to Pause	Community Alliances for Local Impact (CALI)	Safe Spaces Trauma-Informed Training
DESCRIPTION	Campaign to prevent youth suicide and self-harm through suicide prevention messaging and local evidence-based suicide prevention programming	Campaign reducing mental health stigma and promoting help-seeking actions	Community-based campaigns to reduce stigma and promote emotional wellness	Free training to recognize and respond to signs of trauma and stress
STATE LEAD(S) AND CONTRACTED PARTNER(S)*	**CDPH**, with Civilian, the Center at Sierra Health Foundation and University of California, LA	**CDPH**, with Rescue Agency	**CDPH**, with the Public Health Institute	**OSG** and **CDPH**, with WestEd and UCAAN
FUNDING ALLOCATION**	$40M	$24M	$30M	$1.5M
TIMELINE***	Apr 2023 to June 2025	Dec 2023 to June 2026	Mar 2024 to present	June 2023 to present
KEY RESULTS	• **1.6B+ impressions** and 3M+ website visits generated through June 2025 • **33 grantee partners** led 5K+ activities that supported 114K+ direct interactions with youth and caregivers • **76% of survey respondents** agreed the campaign strengthened confidence in supporting others	• **1.1B+** impressions, as of April 2026 • **12.7K+** personalized Pause Plans created through January 2026 • **48%** of surveyed youth 13-17 years old reached in the first four months	• **28** local campaigns developed by community and tribal organizations • **1.5K+** community events hosted including meetings, workshops, town halls and wellness fairs • **3M+** attendees at community events	• **10K+** trainings completed, through March 2026 • **93%+** of learners report the training provided new or reinforced existing helpful practices • **Train-the-Trainer** workshops coming online to expand capacity for in-person learning
LEARN MORE	Never a Bother	Take Space to Pause	CALI Campaigns	Take the Safe Spaces Training

APPENDIX (CONTINUED)

WORKSTREAM NAME	Live Beyond ACEs	Youth Mental Health Academy	Health Professions Pathways Program	Substance Use Disorder Earn and Learn Grant Program
DESCRIPTION	Campaign about adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), toxic stress, and healing strategies	14-month career development program with classroom instruction, paid internships, mentorship and capstone projects	Grants to support pipeline programs, internships, fellowships and other healthcareer exploration opportunities	Education and paid job experience for students earning their Substance Use Disorder certification
STATE LEAD(S) AND CONTRACTED PARTNER(S)*	**OSG**, with Civilian Agency	**HCAI**, with the Child Mind Institute	**HCAI**	**HCAI**
FUNDING ALLOCATION**	$24M	$27M	$36.4M	$13.9M
TIMELINE***	May 2024 to present	Dec 2022 to June 2027	Nov 2022 to June 2028	June 2023 to June 2027
KEY RESULTS	• **1.3B+** impressions generated • **1 in 4** youth ages 16-25 years reached in the first ten months • **50%+** increase in caregivers' reported knowledge and awareness of ACEs	• **2.7K+** high school student participants • **80+** partnering organizations hosted interns for Cohort 2 • **10** counties represented across academy cohorts	• **38K+** participants in pipeline programs • **1.5K+** summer internships supported • **295** undergraduate fellowships and post-baccalaureate scholarships	• **6** partnering organizations operating with 11 sites in 9 counties • **510** students supported through Spring 2026 • **96%** of students felt better after utilizing peer services
LEARN MORE	Live Beyond ACEs	Youth Mental Health Academy	HCAI Health Professions Pathways Program	Substance Use Disorder Earn and Learn Program

APPENDIX (CONTINUED)

WORKSTREAM NAME	CBO Behavioral Health Workforce Grant Program	Open Doors Training	Peer Personnel Training and Placement Program	Public Behavioral Health Social Work Training and Fellowship
DESCRIPTION	Supporting CBOs to recruit and retain behavioral health personnel through loan repayments, scholarships, and stipends	Free training for adults to help youth manage substance use and behavioral health concerns	Providing individuals with experience with behavioral health challenges with training and placement in designated peer positions	Educational stipends and fellowships to support social work students and graduates
STATE LEAD(S) AND CONTRACTED PARTNER(S)*	**HCAI**	**HCAI**, with the California Alliance of Child and Family Services	**HCAI**	**HCAI**, with the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC)
FUNDING ALLOCATION**	$116.6M	$9M	$45.9M	$25M
TIMELINE***	Aug 2023 to June 2027	Jan 2024 to Aug 2027	Oct 2022 to June 2027	Mar 2023 to June 2027
KEY RESULTS	• **2.9K+** awards across 132 CBOs in Fiscal Year 23/24 • **2.9K+** awards across 132 CBOs in Fiscal Year 24/25 • **2.6K+** awards across in Fiscal Year 25/26, with similar goal for Fiscal Year 26/27.	• **725+** trainees completed the core training as of Spring 2026 • **30+** additional core trainings scheduled through Fall 2026 • **Train-the-Trainer** workshops launched February 2026 to expand in-person learning	• **49** partnering organizations • **10K+** individuals supported	• **310+** advanced year trainees received stipends, through 2024-25 school year • **110** foundation year trainees received stipends, through 2024-25 school year
LEARN MORE	Community-Based Organization Behavioral Health Workforce Grant Program	Get Trained with Open Doors	HCAI Peer Personnel Training and Placement Program	Public Behavioral Health Social Work Programs

APPENDIX (CONTINUED)

WORKSTREAM NAME	Certified Wellness Coach Program	Train New Trainers: Primary Care - Training and Education in Addiction Medicine	Education Capacity Expansion Programs	Scholarships and Loan Repayment Programs
DESCRIPTION	Building a workforce of trained and certified professionals to provide pre-clinical behavioral health services	12-month fellowship program teaching how to complete evidence-based psychiatric interviews in primary care	Increasing academic training slots for social work (bachelor's and master's) psychiatric mental health nursing, and psychiatry (residency and fellowships)	Financial support for students in eligible behavioral health programs, including aspiring Certified Wellness Coaches
STATE LEAD(S) AND CONTRACTED PARTNER(S)*	**HCAI**	**HCAI**, with University of California, Irvine	**HCAI**	**HCAI**
FUNDING ALLOCATION**	$258.9M (program administration) $116M (Medi-Cal benefit)	$18.6M	$133.2M	$49M
TIMELINE***	Oct 2021 to present	Sept 2022 to June 2027	Jan 2023 to June 2027	Dec 2023 to Aug 2026
KEY RESULTS	• **4.3K+** Certified Wellness Coaches as of Spring 2026 • **600+** Scholarship recipients • **35+** partnerships with colleges and universities to become designated programs	• **422** scholarships awarded • **350** scholarship awards planned for 2026	• **53** combined grant agreements with training institutions • **1.1K+** social work students trained through Spring 2026 • **830+** psychiatry students, residents, and fellows trained through Spring 2026	• **1.8K+** students awarded support • **51** counties represented among awardees
LEARN MORE	Certified Wellness Coaches	Primary Care-TEAM program	Education Capacity Expansion programs	Scholarships and Loan Repayment Programs

APPENDIX (CONTINUED)

WORKSTREAM NAME	Justice Serving Network	Children, Youth, and Family Network	Transforming Together	Overall Evaluation
DESCRIPTION	Resources to strengthen the capacity of CBOs serving young people impacted by criminal legal systems	Statewide network of youth-serving CBOs serving as paid consultants for bidirectional engagement	Supporting development of a youth-centered, integrated behavioral health ecosystem	Evaluating progress toward improving outcomes and identifying opportunities for more effective implementation
STATE LEAD(S) AND CONTRACTED PARTNER(S)*	**OYCR** and **DHCS**, with the Public Works Alliance	**CalHHS**, with The Social Changery	**CalHHS**, with San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools	**CalHHS**, with Mathematica
FUNDING ALLOCATION**	$13.5M	$4M	$3.5M	$26M
TIMELINE***	Sept 2024-Jan 2027	Apr 2022 to June 2026	Aug 2023 through June 2026	Nov 2022 to June 2026
KEY RESULTS	• **10** organizations in first cohort receiving support to navigate Medi-Cal billing • **3** learning briefs published to share emerging lessons	• **20+** youth-serving organizations represented in network • **73K+** community members engaged through outreach events • **2** reports highlighting youth calls-to-action to improve behavioral health	• **1** implementation Guide created to advance integated leadership, services, workforce, data, and financing strategies • **4** counties supported to further efforts: Alameda, Fresno, Humboldt and Imperial • **4** webinars available to learn best practices	• **15** objectives measured through 50+ metrics on digital dashboard • **17** counties profiled to assess CYBHI implementation • **1** community evaluation advisory group established
LEARN MORE	Justice Serving Network	The Children, Youth, and Family Network	Transforming Together	Visit the CYBHI Evaluation Hub

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