

NEWS RELEASE



DHCS AWARDS NEARLY \$10 MILLION TO EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS TO HELP ADDRESS OVERDOSE DEATHS AND BROADER MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

SACRAMENTO — The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), has awarded \$9.6 million to 81 emergency departments, for the **CalBridge Behavioral Health Navigator Program** with each receiving up to \$120,000 to establish and train behavioral health navigators to expand access to substance use and mental health services.

California general acute care hospitals with Emergency departments (comprehensive, basic, or standby) that received the funding can:

- » Hire or maintain an ED-based navigator;
- » Identify, screen, and interview patients with substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health conditions and link them to appropriate treatment;
- » Educate providers about Medication-Assisted Treatment;
- » Build an environment that welcomes disclosure of substance use and provides rapid evidence-based treatment; and
- » Help patients with co-occurring mental health conditions navigate to outpatient treatment.

In order to implement this new standard of care throughout the state, the CalBridge Behavioral Health Navigator Program will offer all participating hospitals access to materials, training, and technical assistance for navigators, clinicians, nurses, community health workers, and other hospital staff and stakeholders.

"DHCS is committed to getting people the help they need for addiction and mental illness," said DHCS Director Michelle Baass. "Helping place patient navigators in emergency departments will positively change the outcomes of many lives."

The CalBridge Behavioral Health Navigator Program aims to expand the emergency department workforce to address the urgent need for behavioral health patient care. Drug overdose deaths more than doubled in California from [2017 to 2021](#), and mental health emergencies are [rising](#). Addiction and mental illnesses often result in life-or-death emergencies, so it is imperative that emergency departments provide evidence-based treatment 24/7 in all communities.

The CalBridge Behavioral Health Navigator Program is funded by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 under key initiatives for [Medi-Cal's Home and Community-Based Services](#). By increasing the number of behavioral health navigators in Emergency departments, those with a substance use disorder or who are experiencing a mental health crisis will be able to have access to the appropriate care to address their needs.

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ABOUT THE CA BRIDGE PROGRAM

The CA Bridge Program, a program of the [Public Health Institute](#), is working to ensure that people with substance use disorders receive 24/7 high-quality care in every California health system by 2025. The program seeks to fully integrate addiction treatment into standard medical practice, breaking down barriers to accessible treatment and saving lives. More information is available at www.cabridge.org.

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