

CALIFORNIA AWARDS \$4.6 MILLION TO EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS TO TRAIN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NAVIGATORS

SACRAMENTO — The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) today awarded more than \$4.6 million to 39 hospitals with emergency departments (EDs), each receiving \$120,000 to train behavioral health navigators to help expand access to substance use disorder and mental health services. The awards are part of DHCS' [CalBridge Behavioral Health Navigator Program](#). To date, 282 hospitals have received funding under CalBridge.

"People with substance use disorders deserve 24/7 high-quality care in every California health system," said **California Health & Human Services (CalHHS) Secretary Dr. Mark Ghaly**. "This program seeks to fully integrate addiction treatment into standard medical practice, increasing access to treatment and saving lives."

"Behavioral health navigators serve as a critical link for bridging patients with needed community substance use and mental health services, and they are integral to our statewide efforts to combat the opioid crisis and address the systemic need for expanded patient care after an emergency room visit," said **DHCS Director Michelle Baass**.

HOW GRANTS HELP: California general acute care hospitals with EDs (comprehensive, basic, or standby) that receive funding can:

- Establish and train behavioral health navigators to increase patient access to care.
- Identify, screen, and interview patients with substance use disorders and co-occurring mental health conditions and link them to appropriate treatment.
- Implement consistent delivery of Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT).
- Adopt new models for reaching historically disadvantaged populations.
- Build an environment that welcomes disclosure of substance use and provides rapid evidence-based treatment.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT: These awards are part of a larger effort by CalHHS to strengthen California's health and human services workforce. CalBridge aims to train and expand the ED workforce to address the urgent need for behavioral health patient care.

By increasing the number of behavioral health navigators in EDs, people with a substance use or opioid use disorder, or who are experiencing a mental health crisis, will have access to appropriate care to address their needs. CalBridge supports all participating hospitals with access to materials, training, and technical assistance for navigators, clinicians, nurses, community health workers, and other hospital staff and stakeholders.

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND: CalBridge is funded by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 under key initiatives for Medi-Cal's Home and Community-Based Services.

Opioid drug overdose deaths totaled 7,175 in California in [2021](#), with 21,016 ED visits related to an opioid overdose. Addiction and mental illnesses sometimes result in life-or-death emergencies, so it is imperative that EDs provide evidence-based treatment in all communities.

Since coming into office, Governor Gavin Newsom has dedicated more than \$1 billion in funding to fight the opioid crisis by removing opioids from the streets, providing resources to California communities in need, and increasing education and awareness to prevent harm in the first place.

In fiscal year 2022-23, DHCS is investing more than \$558 million in various opioid prevention and treatment grant activities. Today's award follows several efforts made by DHCS in recent months to tackle substance use and opioid use disorders, including [\\$2.4 million for the MAT in Jails and Drug Courts Project](#), [\\$2 million for the California Native MAT Network for Healing and Recovery Project](#), [\\$4 million to 54 driving under the influence programs for resources and treatment](#), [\\$52 million invested in opioid prevention and treatment services](#), [\\$12 million to tackle youth opioid use](#), [\\$3.4 million to transform medical practices to address the opioid crisis](#), and [\\$58.5 million for youth substance use prevention](#).

#

NUMBER: 23-09 | **DATE:** March 1, 2023

CONTACT: [Office of Communications](#), (916) 440-7660

www.dhcs.ca.gov