Behavioral Health Services

Public Behavioral Health Workforce and Retention Fund

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD

February 6, 2025

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- **Mental Health Services Act Innovation Program**
  - Approved for $75 million, over five years
  - Two components:
    - Loan Fund Program
    - Upskilling Program
  - Approved by the Behavioral Health Commission
    (formerly the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission)
  - Approved by the County Board of Supervisors
  - Includes a formal evaluation component (UCSD)

- **Program Administrator: Policy & Innovation Center**
  - Loan Fund Program: Social Finance
  - Upskilling Program: Trailhead Strategies

- **Preliminary Program Overview** *(subject to change)*

1. Includes Licensed Clinical Social Workers, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, and Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors

PROGRAM GOAL AND KEY COMPONENTS

Goal

To attract and retain workers in the public behavioral health field by deploying funding to support individuals seeking a variety of training, tuition support, upskilling, and incentive opportunities

Program Components

1 No cost trainings

Free on-ramps for individuals training for certain entry-level BH occupations

- No-cost apprenticeships for **SUD Counselors**, **Case Managers**, **Community Health Workers** (and other in-demand BH roles)
- Training and job placements for newly certified **Peer Support Specialists**

2 0% interest loans

Preferential financing for individuals training for higher-income BH roles

- Occupations of focus include **Licensed Clinicians**[2], **Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners**, **RNs** and **LVNs**
- **Incumbent workers** in public BH are eligible for retention-based reductions in their loans
- Loans can cover tuition and costs of living

3 Capacity building support

Grants to institutions to increase training capacity and/or clinical supervision

- Funding to support launch or expansion of **NP programs** with specialty tracks in BH
- Funding for **MSW programs** to expand clinical supervision and paid internships in public BH settings

1. Includes Licensed Clinical Social Workers, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, and Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors

LOAN FUND OVERVIEW

PRELIMINARY

The Loan Fund will support the training and retention of new and incumbent workers via a student-friendly financing option, and will recycle repayments to serve additional individuals

0%

Zero-percent interest rate

Borrowers pay no interest or fees and are only responsible for repaying the principal amount



No repayment obligation for borrowers earning a specific threshold

Borrowers earning a certain threshold are eligible for income-based deferment of their loan, during which their monthly payment is $0



Loan forgiveness after 5 years of service in public BH

Borrowers working in public behavioral health that are current on their loan for five years are eligible for forgiveness of their remaining loan balance

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Pay it forward

Borrowers' repayments are recycled by the fund to serve additional individuals, extending the impact of each dollar, and giving participants a way to "pay it forward"

UPSKILLING PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Supporting individuals to start, advance, or complete BH education and training and enter in public BH employment in San Diego over the next 5 years

- **RFP #1:** Launch and expand one or more local **Nursing Practitioner** program with specialty track(s) in behavioral health, supporting NP students to get didactic and clinical experience in public BH settings.
- **RFP #2**: Establishing **no-cost apprenticeships** to help individuals become **SUD Counselors, case managers, community health workers**, and other in-demand roles determined by public BH employers.
- **RFP #3**: Funds to train, place, and retain new certified **peer support specialists** in San Diego County.
- **RFP #4**: Provide **paid internships and funding for clinical supervision through MSW** programs and internship site partners.
- **Retention benefits** to pay down/make payments for 0% interest loans for existing BH employees in exchange for service in public BH settings.

These investments will be focused on building local education and training capacity that can be sustained over time, beyond the 5-year funding window.

ILLUSTRATIVE STUDENT JOURNEYS

ILLUSTRATIVE

Students' paths to advancement will be shaped by the occupation they are training for and whether they currently and/or continue to work in public behavioral health

Student A Outreach Worker	Enrolls in SUD Counselor Apprenticeship Program with no out-of-pocket cost.	They have no repayment obligation regardless of path after training.	
Student B Out-of-County RN	**Borrows $40,000 at 0% interest** to finance graduate NP education.	They become an NP in public behavioral health, earning above the designated income threshold per year.	They make standard monthly payments, and any remaining loan balance is forgiven after 5 years of service in public BH.
Student C Public BH case manager	**Borrows $40,000 at 0% interest** to finance MSW education.	They return to public BH as a social worker and qualify for retention benefits as an incumbent worker.	They make standard monthly payments, plus their retention benefit covers an extra $5,000 in principal repayment per year. Their loan is paid off before 5 years.
Student D Public BH case manager	**Borrows $40,000 at 0% interest** to finance MSW education.	They go into private practice, earning above the salary threshold. They do not qualify for retention benefits or loan forgiveness.	They make monthly payments until the loan is repaid in full.

NEXT STEPS

PRELIMINARY

We will continue to collaborate closely with the BHS Working Group on key next steps and welcome any additional questions and feedback from the Behavioral Health Advisory Board

- Host public webinar(s) to share high-level plans
- Finalize Upskilling Program frameworks; host public input sessions
- Finalize Loan Fund program design and select initial partners for launch; prepare for first enrollments starting in Fall 2025

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