

Investing in Your Health – Building a Broader Mental Health Workforce and Innovative Programs to Meet California’s Mental Health Care Demand



Mental health is an essential part of overall health and well-being. California’s health plans support state and federal laws requiring parity for mental health and physical health coverage and have been working for decades to reduce stigma and provide greater mental health access to Californians seeking help.

By 2028, California will have 28% fewer psychologists, marriage and family therapists, licensed counselors, and social workers and 50% fewer psychiatrists.

*Source: 2019 Future Health Workforce Commission

To meet California’s mental health care demand, California health plans are investing in building a broader workforce that will **boost the pipeline of ethnically and geographically diverse clinicians required to meet the increasing demand for care and connect members with the right support when they need it.**

California’s health plans are taking positive steps to strengthen California’s mental health care system and invest in solutions to resolve California’s mental health workforce challenges, including:

- **Investing in mental health workforce needs assessments** to help inform policy changes that seek to increase and diversify California’s mental health workforce, in partnership with the state and California counties.
- **Investing in mental health clinicians, recruitment, education, and training** programs.
- **Offering scholarship and loan forgiveness programs** to encourage qualified individuals to pursue careers in mental health care, with the goal of increasing the number of psychiatrists within California’s health care safety net.

Health plans are also thinking beyond the typical office setting and pioneering innovative programs to improve the mental health of their members, including:

- **Coverage for telehealth access was instrumental for members** throughout the pandemic. In fact, **almost 40% of mental health visits in 2020 were conducted through telehealth, compared to less than 1% in 2019. Telehealth continues to be an important option for accessing critical mental health care services.**
- **Working closely with providers to help members receive mental health care at many different touchpoints beyond the typical office setting** — including by embedding mental health providers in emergency departments and primary care clinics and offices.
- **Providing online wellness and coaching programs plus free access to trusted mental health apps**, which are not intended to replace treatment, but which evidence shows can provide significant relief to those with mild-to-moderate anxiety and depression.
- **Engaging and investing in anti-stigma educational campaigns** to increase awareness and encourage Californians to seek mental health care and support when they need it.

Health plans understand there is more we must all do to meet the **increasing treatment needs** of those suffering from addiction and mental illness, and will continue to invest in the mental health of Californians. By working **collaboratively**, with a spirit of shared responsibility, **health plans, providers, state leaders, and advocates can effectively address the mental health challenges in California, save lives and improve the mental and physical well-being of all Californians.**

For more information, please visit
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California Association of
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