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DHCS
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH CARE SERVICES

# Client Engagement and Navigation Services for those who are Unhoused: Panel Discussion

## AFBSS Webinar Series: April 9, 2026

The Assertive Field-Based Substance Use Disorder/Opioid Use Disorder Services Training and Technical Assistance is funded by California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). This session is presented by Health Management Associates. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, DHCS.

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|---|---|
| Charles Robbins, MBA | Mr. Robbins discloses that he is an employee of Health Management Associates, a national research and consulting firm providing technical assistance to a diverse group of health care clients. |
| Rachel Johnson-Yates, MA, LMHC, LAC | Ms. Johnson-Yates discloses that she is an employee of Health Management Associates, a national research and consulting firm providing technical assistance to a diverse group of health care clients. |
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# Presenters

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# Agenda

- Assertive Field-Based Initiation of Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Treatment and Services
- Panel Discussion
- Open Questions & Answers

# Learning Objectives

At the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Identify evidence-based, field-tested strategies for engaging and supporting individuals who are unhoused through outreach and related services.
- Describe practical approaches used by frontline providers to address common challenges encountered in field-based support work.
- Apply insights from panelists to inform participants' own outreach, service delivery, or program development efforts through discussion and Q&A.

# Assertive Field-Based Initiation of SUD Treatment and Services

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# Proposition 1

1. **Authorizes a $6.38 billion Behavioral Health Infrastructure Bond (AB 531)**
   - Funding behavioral health (BH) treatment beds, supportive housing, and community sites
   - Funding for housing for veterans with BH needs and persons experiencing homelessness

2. **Amends the MHSA (SB 326)**
   - Renames Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) (passed by proposition in 2004) the **"Behavioral Health Services Act"** (BHSA); adds Substance Use Disorder (SUD) so it's both Mental Health (MH) and SUD
   - Modifies how MHSA funds are allocated
   - Changes eligible population
   - Changes to oversight, accountability, and the community planning process

SOURCE(S): DHCS, 2026.

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# BHSA: Purpose and Goals

» Purpose
- Reform, modernize, and expand the MHSA to address homelessness, substance use disorder, and systemic gaps.

» Core Goals
- Improve access to integrated behavioral health care.
- Expand housing interventions for vulnerable populations.
- Enhance transparency and equity in outcomes.

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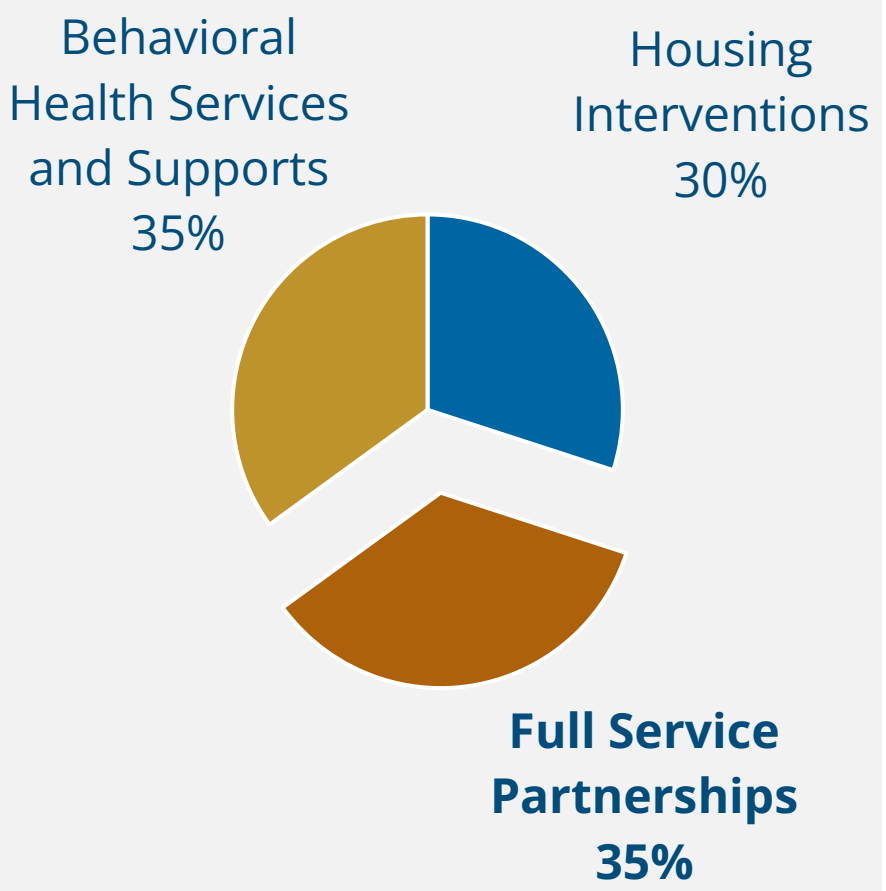
# Full Service Partnership (FSP)

## What it is:

- FSP programs provide individualized, team-based care to individuals living with significant behavioral health needs through a “whatever it takes” approach.

## Key Features:

- 35% of county BHSA funding.
- FSP programs must make the full FSP continuum available.
- Integration of SUD treatment.
- Initiation of Assertive Field-Based SUD Services




SOURCE(S): DHCS, 2026 BHSA PM v1.3.2.2.

# Assertive Field-Based Initiation for SUD Treatment Services – Approach

- Provide technical assistance (TA) under the BHSA to support counties in the implementation of Assertive Field-Based Initiation for Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Treatment Services (AFBSS).
- More proactive strategies are needed to engage, prevent overdose, and improve access to Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) for most individuals living with SUD who remain unengaged in care. **Note: all SUDs, not just opioid use disorder (OUD).**
- Counties will be required to deploy assertive field-based initiation programs that proactively engage individuals living with SUD and offer low-barrier access to MAT.

SOURCE(S): DHCS, 2026; California Legislative Information, 2023.

# Assertive Field-Based Initiation for SUD Treatment Services – Approach (Continued)

- Assertive field-based initiation promotes a proactive “no wrong door” approach to connect more individuals living with SUD to MAT on a voluntary basis, similar to assertive, field-based models that promote proactive engagement and treatment of individuals living with serious mental illness (SMI).
- Counties are encouraged to identify these populations, including people who are unhoused/housing insecure, justice-involved, and individuals with co-occurring mental health needs.
- Assertive field-based initiation requires counties to conduct ongoing, targeted outreach to engage and initiate individuals living with SUD into MAT (or other treatment services) in any community-based and low-barrier setting.

# Assertive Field-Based Initiation for SUD Treatment Services – Approach (Continued)

- Community-based low-barrier settings include:
  - The street
  - Shelters
  - Homeless encampments
  - Consumer-operated wellness centers
  - Drop-in centers
  - Syringe service programs
  - Medication and mobile narcotic treatment programs
  - Other easily accessed locations to reach people where they are

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# Programs that Qualify under the Three Categories

» Counties are required to provide rapid access to all FDA approved MAT by strengthening existing and/or standing-up at least one initiative in each of the following three areas that comprise their assertive field-based programs:

**Data informed, targeted outreach**

**Mobile field-based programs**

**Open-access clinics**

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# Panel Discussion

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# Panelists

**Brett Feldman**, MSPAS, PA-C
Director and Co-Founder
USC Street Medicine
Associate Professor of Family Medicine
Keck School of Medicine of USC

**Katie Quijada,** MPH, CHES, CHW
Connect Navigator
CA Bridge

**Shayan Rab,** MD
Chief of Psychiatry
Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health

# Discussion Questions

- Question: Can you describe your scope of practice?
- Question: What are strategies to consider for client engagement for county behavioral health (BH)?
- Question: How does LA County manage medications for those who are unhoused?
- Question: How do you identify, develop, and structure partnerships with other agencies?
- Question: How can field-based team members approach motivational enhancement for individuals who have not had the recent capacity to prioritize self-care?

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# Questions?

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