



# Behavioral Health Employer Learning Community

Aligning Hiring and Internal Advancement Opportunity with the  
ELEVATE Peer Support Training and Placement Grants

12.04.2025



# Goals of the Employer Learning Community (ELC)

- Provide executives, HR leaders, and hiring managers from eligible ELEVATE employers the latest updates on ELEVATE programs
- Explore opportunities to use ELEVATE programs to advance your hiring, internal training, and retention goals
- Ask questions and raise issues about how the programs are operating and how they can be improved
- Connect with program partners (education institutions, training providers, etc.)
- Learn from peer organizations about workforce best practices and lessons learned



# The “WIFM” for Eligible Employers

## **Pay It Forward Loan Program:**

- Recruit master’s graduates that have taken out a loan, and promote that they can receive loan forgiveness on eligible job postings and loan balance reductions for incumbent employees who return to an eligible behavioral health role
- Refer/support current employees to return to school and upskill to become licensed clinicians

## ▪ **Behavioral Health Apprenticeship Network:**

- Get education and certification costs covered to help current and new staff become get certifications (e.g., CADC I, BH Wellness Coach)
- Get a steady pipeline of unlicensed professionals, with potential subsidies to offset mentorship/supervision costs

## ▪ **Peer Support Training and Placement Grants:**

- Hire CalMHSA Certified Peers
- Get current staff certified
- Receive services and TA to retain peers and support their advancement

## ▪ **Nurse Practitioner Expansion Program:**

- Get supervision, support and technical assistance to incorporate PMHNP’s into your clinical services
- Serve as a host site for post-graduate PMHNP fellows

## ▪ **Social Work, Therapy, and Counseling Internship and Associate Program:**

- (TBD)



# Program Context and Goals

## Context

The Elevate Behavioral Health Workforce Fund is a Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Innovation Program approved for **\$75 million over five years** by the Behavioral Health Commission and the San Diego County Board of Supervisors. MHSA Innovation funds are intentional in identifying innovative, new or adaptive approaches in addressing community mental health services.

## Goals

The goal of The Elevate Behavioral Health Workforce Fund is 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.

## Team

The **Policy & Innovation Center** (PIC) was procured by San Diego County as the Program Administrator of The Elevate Behavioral Health Workforce Fund and will be partnering with two subcontractors **Social Finance** and **Trailhead Strategies** to implement The Elevate Behavioral Health Workforce Fund.



# Agenda

- ELEVATE Behavioral Health Workforce Fund Updates (5 minutes)
- Recap of last meeting (5 minutes)
- Overview NAMI (20 minutes)
- Overview of Pacific Clinics(20 minutes)
- Next steps (10 minutes)





**ELEVATE**  
Behavioral Health  
Workforce Fund

# ELEVATE UPDATES





# ELEVATE

Behavioral Health Workforce Fund

## San Diego Pay It Forward Loan Program

Funding to provide zero-interest, forgivable student loans for behavioral health programs.



## Nurse Practitioner (NP) Expansion Grant Program

Funding to launch and/or expand graduate NP programs to help students to become psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners (PMHNPs) in public settings



## Behavioral Health Apprenticeship Network

Funding for apprentices to become SUD Counselors, case managers, community health workers, and other in-demand roles.



## Peer Support Specialist Training Grant Program

Funding to train, place, and retain Certified Peer Support Specialists in San Diego County.



## Social Work, Counseling, and Therapy Internship Program

Funding to provide paid, high-quality internships and associate supervision opportunities for social work, therapy, and clinical counseling students in public BH.

# Take Action



In Partnership with  
FOUNDATION for CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

## Behavioral Health Apprenticeship Network:

- **Review** the October 2nd ELC [meeting recording](#) (Passcode: u+mFph3A)
- **Complete** 5-minute [Employer Interest Form](#) to help us understand how we might best support your organization explore, plan and/or implement an apprenticeship program.
- **Attend** an Employer Informational Session >>



In partnership with:



## Behavioral Health Apprenticeship Network Employer Information Sessions

### Join one of three sessions to learn:

- What is Registered Apprenticeship?
- What is an Apprenticeship Committee?
- How can you get connected to the Network?
- What support exists for you to launch apprenticeship at your organization

**December 2nd**  
10AM-11AM  
[Register Here](#)



**December 10th**  
2PM-3PM  
[Register Here](#)



**December 12th**  
9AM-10AM  
[Register Here](#)



For more information, please contact  
Keith Gemmell at [keith@launchapprenticeship.org](mailto:keith@launchapprenticeship.org)

# “What’s in it for me?” // The WIFM for Employers



*In Partnership with*  
FOUNDATION for CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

## Behavioral Health Apprenticeship Network:

- Get education and certification costs covered to help current and new staff earn state certifications (e.g., CADC I, BH Wellness Coach) through an apprenticeship tuition assistance program
- Get a steady pipeline of unlicensed professionals, with potential subsidies to offset mentorship/supervision costs
- Build out internal mentorship and supervision structure in your organization for key roles





**ELEVATE**  
Behavioral Health  
Workforce Fund

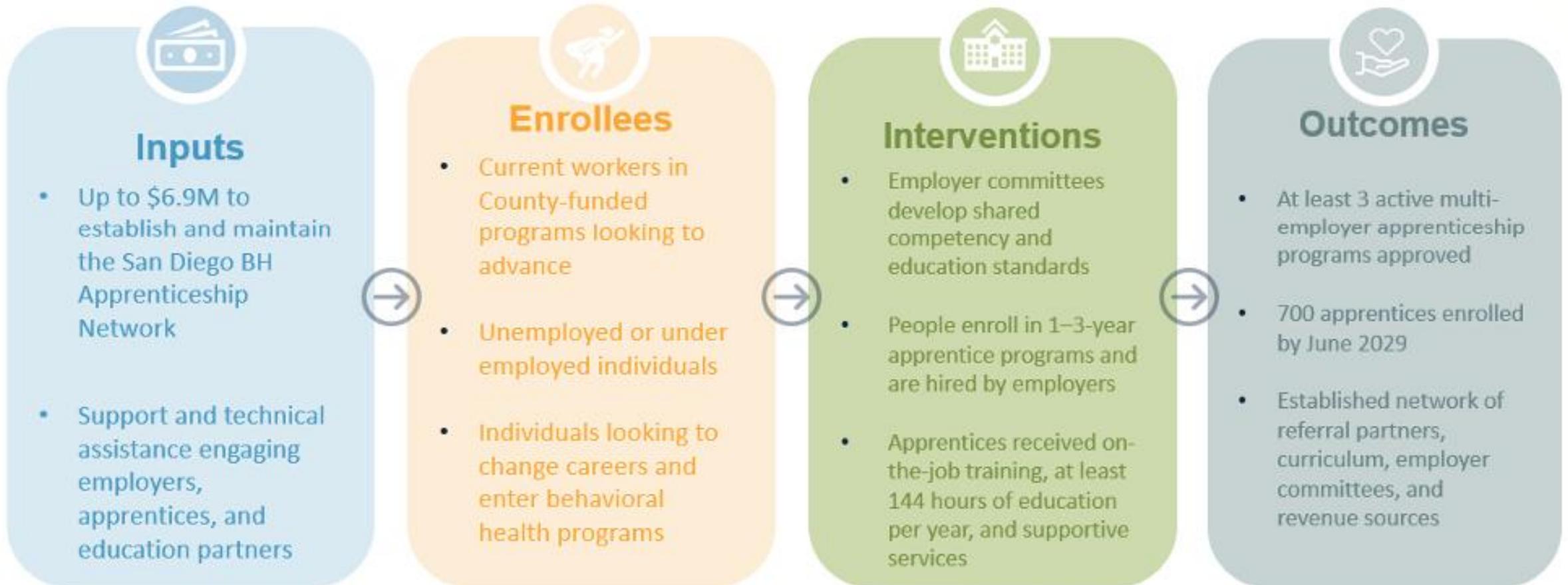
## Recap of Last ELC Meeting



# Behavioral Health Apprenticeship Network

## Problem Statement

- There is a shortage of SUD Counselors, Case Managers, Community Health Workers, and other key BH fields.
- The traditional education model to enter these fields is not producing the needed professionals and can be particularly challenging for adult learners and individuals with lived experience.



# “What’s in it for me?” // The WIFM for Employers



*In Partnership with*  
FOUNDATION for CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

## Behavioral Health Apprenticeship Network:

- Get education and certification costs covered to help current and new staff earn state certifications (e.g., CADC I, BH Wellness Coach) through an apprenticeship tuition assistance program
- Get a steady pipeline of unlicensed professionals, with potential subsidies to offset mentorship/supervision costs
- Build out internal mentorship and supervision structure in your organization for key roles

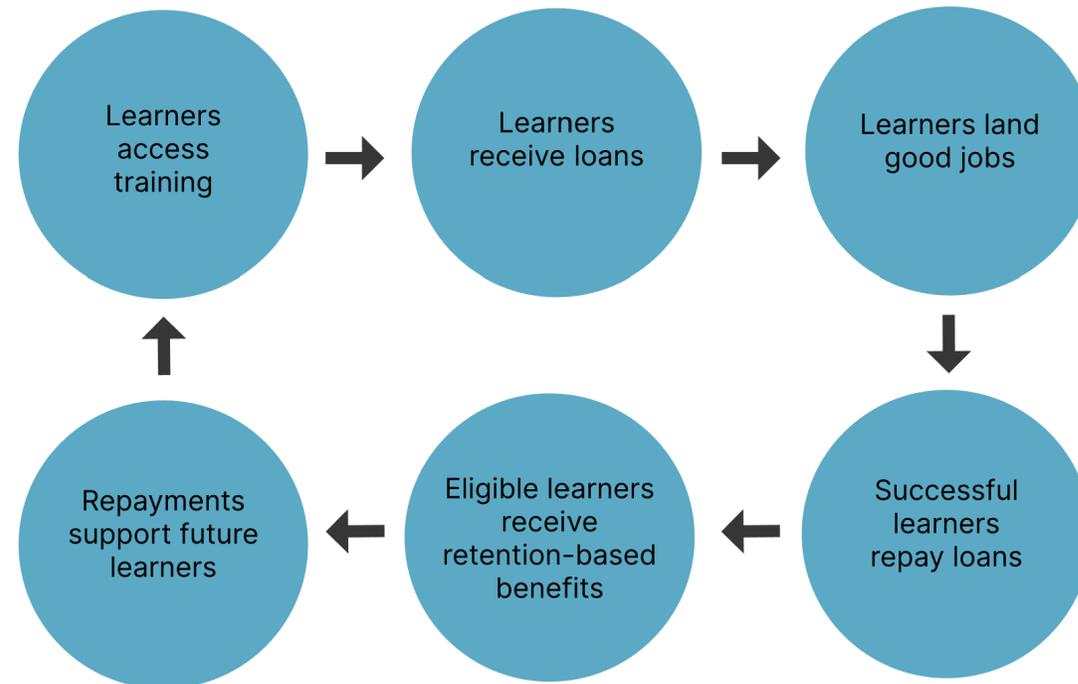


# SD Pay It Forward Loan Program

The San Diego Pay It Forward Loan Program supports the training and retention of new and incumbent public BH workers via student-friendly loans and will recycle loan repayments to serve future participants

- **0% interest** and no student-facing fees
- **Income-based deferment** for borrowers earning below minimum income threshold
- **Incumbent workers** are eligible for retention-based credits toward their loan balances
- **Loan forgiveness** after 5 years of service in public behavioral health
- Borrower repayments **“pay it forward”** to future participants

## How it Works



# Key Loan Terms

<b>Loan type</b>	<b>Private education loan</b> (subject to Truth in Lending Act disclosure requirements, definitions of post-secondary education expenses, and credit reporting)
<b>Loan size</b>	<b>\$10,000 – \$20,000</b> per academic year <b>\$40,000</b> aggregate maximum per person
<b>Interest rate / APR</b>	<b>0%</b> interest; no student-facing fees
<b>Minimum income threshold</b>	Deferment option if <b>earning below \$50,000</b> per year (and other standard deferment options are available – e.g. medical, financial hardship, natural disaster, military service)
<b>Loan term</b>	<b>10 years</b>
<b>Repayment amount</b>	<b>Fixed</b> monthly payments
<b>In-School / Grace periods</b>	No repayment obligation while <b>in school or during 3-month grace period</b> after graduation / exit
<b>Loan forgiveness</b>	<b>5-year service in eligible public BH role</b> (also for death and TPD)
<b>Incumbent worker retention benefit</b>	Up to <b>5 annual loan credits</b> for incumbent workers returning to eligible public BH role



# San Diego Pay It Forward Loan Program

Access zero-interest loans to cover tuition, fees, and living expenses while you participate in an eligible behavioral health clinician program.

## EXAMPLE LOAN REPAYMENT SCENARIOS



Student A

Student A borrows \$40,000 at 0% interest to finance a Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy educational program.

They go on to work as a clinician in public behavioral health after completing their educational program, **earning \$70,000 per year.**

They make fixed monthly payments, and any remaining loan balance is forgiven after 5 years of service in public behavioral health at an eligible employer.



Student B

Student B borrows \$20,000 at 0% interest to finance a Master of Social Work educational program.

They work as a case manager, earning \$45,000 per year. They apply for income-based deferment, and their monthly loan repayment amount is \$0.

After one year, they begin working as a clinician in public behavioral health, **earning \$60,000 per year.**

They now start making fixed monthly payments, and any remaining loan balance is forgiven after 5 years of service in public behavioral health at an eligible employer.

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Pursuing a degree or certificate to start or advance your career in behavioral health can be an exciting opportunity and a challenge. You might be wondering, how can I afford the cost of going back to school?

Through the San Diego Pay It Forward Loan Program, you can apply for a 0% interest loan to help cover tuition, fees, and living expenses at a participating behavioral health educational program.

## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The 2025-26 academic year eligible educational programs include:

1. Master of Social Work at San Diego State University
2. Master of Science in Early Childhood and Family Clinical Counseling at San Diego State University
3. Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy at San Diego State University
4. Master of Social Work at California State University San Marcos



## HOW DOES IT WORK?

- 1 **Enroll** in one of the participating educational programs.
- 2 **Apply** for and receive a loan from the San Diego Pay It Forward Loan Program (between \$10,000 and \$20,000 per academic year, up to a total maximum amount of \$40,000).
- 3 **Graduate from your program!**
- 4 Start or continue your career in public behavioral health.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

You may be eligible for the San Diego Pay It Forward Loan Program if you meet ALL of the following criteria:

- Enrolled in an eligible program
- Authorized to work in the U.S
- At least 18 years of age
- Resident of California
- Family income\* that is less than 125% of the median income in San Diego County based on your family size (see table)

*\*Based on the most recent U.S. Census Bureau data available. Thresholds may be updated from time to time. For graduate students, family income is defined as your individual gross income and your spouse's gross income, if you are married.*





# The San Diego Peer Training and Placement Program





# NAMI San Diego & Imperial Counties

Career Pathways Peer Training and Placement Program  
Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Training



# Peer Training and Placement Program

Since 2021-

- Over **745 graduates** from our program
- More than **400** participants successfully **transitioned into employment**
- The success of our **training** is deeply rooted in its collaborative **development by peers**
- **NAMI San Diego** became a **CalMHSA-approved training provider in 2023**

*“Thank you for all your shares and thank you for all your direction. This program has already made me a better person overall, and I can’t wait to implement the tools learned in this course.”*

*Quote from a graduate*



# Ingrid's Story

## How My Lived Experience Shaped My Meaningful Career Pathway

Participant → Volunteer  
Part-time → Full-time  
Associate → Program Manager

*“My lived experience didn't hold me back-it opened the door to a meaningful career.”*



# Anna's Story

## Entering the Behavioral Health Field as a Career Change

- Previous career as a professional artist and in elementary school art education
- Lived experience with ADHD, anxiety, depression, and seizures
- My experiences motivated me to find a way to support others in navigating the system, and to join a movement for systemic change.
- I trained through NAMI San Diego's Peer Training and Placement Program, then obtained certification and experience as a Peer Support Specialist.
- I now work as an employment specialist empowering peers who are beginning their own career changes, supporting their individual goals and passions, and amplifying the peer voice in California.



# What Employers Get

- Job-ready candidates
- No-cost recruitment support
- Onboarding and supervision support
- Six-month retention follow-up
- Workplace readiness skills built into the training
- Career pathways for staff who want to grow

*“Peer support is more than a role—it’s the moment when courage becomes service. When you hire a peer, you bring lived experience, resilience, and hope directly into the heart of your organization.”*

*Ingrid, CMPSS*



# Training Information



## Training Schedule:

**Phase 1:** 13 classes –Zoom/ live attendance required.

**Phase 2:** 6 months of follow-up communication, career counseling, and career placement support.

**Location:** Online (through Zoom)

**Days:** 2.5 weeks, Mondays-Fridays\*

**Time:** 8 am-12 pm\* (including breaks) – participants are required to commit to an additional 28 hours outside of sessions for self-study, homework, and training support.

**All expenses are fully covered**, allowing participants to embark on this journey without financial burden. **This includes training, one certification application and exam, and milestone stipends**, empowering peers to reach their career goals.



# Contact Information

Ingrid Alvarez-Ron, CNP, CMPSS  
Program Manager  
[IngridAlvarezRon@namisd.org](mailto:IngridAlvarezRon@namisd.org)  
(858)225-3251

Anna Maker, CMPSS  
Employment Specialist  
(858)338-3933  
[AnnaCosimini@namisd.org](mailto:AnnaCosimini@namisd.org)

Peer Training and Placement Program  
<https://namisandiego.org/peer-training-and-placement-programs/>

Email: [careerpathways@namisd.org](mailto:careerpathways@namisd.org)





**ELEVATE**  
Behavioral Health  
Workforce Fund



**Pacific Clinics®**  
Training Institute

## Peer Support Training & Placement Program

Helping peers successfully enter the behavioral health workforce with the skills, confidence, and support needed to thrive.



# ABOUT PACIFIC CLINICS



- Pacific Clinics is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) behavioral health agency **founded in 1867** — one of the longest-standing in California.
- Today, we serve **28,000+ clients annually** across 22 counties, including San Diego.
- Services are culturally and linguistically responsive, with staff speaking 20+ languages.
- We incorporate consumer-led advisory committees to ensure client voice and system improvement.

# ABOUT PCTI



Pacific Clinics®  
Training Institute

- **Established in 1996** as the training division of Pacific Clinics.
- Trains professionals, consumers, and family members statewide through multiple formats (live, online, workshops).
- **Has trained 20,000+ learners across sectors.**
- Early adopter in peer workforce development through Pasadena City College paraprofessional certification partnership.



# Meet Our PCTI Team



Audrey Read Brown, LCSW  
Regional Executive Director



Elva Pacheco  
PCTI Director



Prue Cooper, MS Addiction Counseling  
Director, Paraprofessional/SUD Training & Innovation



Mary Cline  
Training Administrator



Ashley Valenzuela  
Training & LMS Coordinator



Jenna Ramsey  
Project Manager



Dr. Livier Martinez, LCSW  
Licensed Learning Partner



Santiago Reyes  
Learning Partner



Jon Michael Sampson  
Learning Partner



Stephanie Armbruster  
Learning Partner



## Pacific Clinics® Training Institute

### What is the ELEVATE Peer Support Training & Placement Program?

- Provides a no-cost training, certification support, and job placement assistance for San Diego County residents with lived experience in recovery.
- Participants receive individualized **guidance from a Learning Partner from day one through certification, employment, and six months of on-the-job support.**
- **This program helps peers successfully enter the behavioral health workforce with the skills, confidence, and support needed to thrive.**

In partnership with





Pacific Clinics®  
Training Institute



Peer Support  
Training and Placement  
Program



In partnership with



### Participants Receive:

- ✓ Career counseling & job readiness coaching  
80-hour Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist (MCPSS) training
- ✓ State certification guidance
- ✓ Vouchers covering application & exam fees
- ✓ Job placement assistance and six months of retention support
- ✓ Ongoing peer mentorship and professional development
- ✓ Up to \$1,000 in incentive stipends for certification milestones and job retention (exceptions may apply)
- ✓



Pacific Clinics®  
Training Institute



Peer Support  
Training and Placement  
Program

### Program Eligibility:

- Be 18 years or older for Part 2 Live training & exam
- Reside in San Diego County
- Have a High School Diploma or GED or higher education
- Identify themselves as a peer with lived experience as a consumer, family member, or
- caregiver of behavioral health or SUD services
- Be interested in entering the behavioral health workforce

### Participant Commitment:

- Complete the 80-hour state-approved training
- Apply for state certification
- Receive ongoing support with a 6-month check-in after job placement



Pacific Clinics®  
Training Institute

## PSS Training Format (Total Hours = 80)

### PART ONE:

31 Self-Paced online learning sessions  
(39 hours) — rolling enrollment

**\* Participants must enroll by the Cohort deadline and complete Part 1 of Self-Paced training at least 5 days before the start of Part 2 Live training**

### PART TWO:

14 Live instructor-led Zoom sessions  
(41 hours, 3 hours each)

**\* Live Sessions usually held 9am-12pm M-F (others schedules available based on demand)**

### County of San Diego ADA Compliance:

Disability-related accommodations, language interpretation, and written materials in alternative languages are available upon request. Please submit your request at least 72 hours in advance of the event to [ELEVATE@thinkpic.org](mailto:ELEVATE@thinkpic.org) or by calling (619) 468-5228.



In partnership with





Pacific Clinics®  
Training Institute

**MCPSS Cohort 17 Training Schedule: Part Two Live Online**

Session #	Hours	Session Title	Date	Time
32	3	Role of Peer Support Specialist	Monday, January 5, 2026	9:00am - 12:00pm
33	3	Professional Boundaries & Applying Your Lived Experience	Tuesday, January 6, 2026	9:00am - 12:00pm
34	3	Confidentiality/Law & Ethics	Wednesday, January 7, 2026	9:00am - 12:00pm
35	3	Co-Occurring Disorders & Harm Reduction	Thursday, January 8, 2026	9:00am - 12:00pm
36	3	Motivational Interviewing Part 1	Friday, January 9, 2026	9:00am - 12:00pm
37	3	Motivational Interviewing Part 2	Monday, January 12, 2026	9:00am - 12:00pm
38	3	Group Facilitation Part 1	Tuesday, January 13, 2026	9:00am - 12:00pm
39	3	Group Facilitation Part 2	Wednesday, January 14, 2026	9:00am - 12:00pm
40	3	Safety & Crisis	Thursday, January 15, 2026	9:00am - 12:00pm
41	3	Conflict Resolution	Friday, January 16, 2026	9:00am - 12:00pm
42	3	Excelling as a Paraprofessional	Tuesday, January 20, 2026	9:00am - 12:00pm
43	3	Exam Prep	Wednesday, January 21, 2026	9:00am - 12:00pm
44	3	Course Review	Thursday, January 22, 2026	9:00am - 12:00pm
45	2	Self-care/Self-awareness	Friday, January 23, 2026	9:00am - 11:00am



In partnership with



# How to Enroll

Step 1:

Complete the [Interest Form](#)

Step 2:

View & Complete Orientation Course

Step 3:

Schedule Enrollment Meeting with lead instructor

Step 4:

Have Enrollment Meeting & Commit to the 80-hour training



Pacific Clinics®  
Training Institute

The screenshot shows the Pacific Clinics logo at the top left. Below it is the title "ELEVATE Peer Support Specialist Program Interest Form". The form contains the following fields:

- First Name: Text input field.
- Middle Name: Text input field.
- Last Name: Text input field.
- Pronouns: Dropdown menu with "--None--" selected.
- Email: Text input field with "you@example.com" entered.
- Phone: Text input field with "Template (10 digits): 0000000000" entered.
- Date of Birth: Text input field with a calendar icon.
- Education Level: Dropdown menu with "--None--" selected.
- Address: Text input field.
- City: Text input field.
- State/Province: Text input field.
- Zip/Postal Code: Text input field.
- Country: Text input field with "United States" selected.
- Are you currently employed?: A small text label at the bottom left.



# Upcoming Cohorts



## Cohort 17



### Self-Paced Modules (Part 1)

\*Participants must enroll by December 9, 2025 and complete all self-paced modules by December 29, 2025 in order to be eligible for Part 2.

### Live Zoom Sessions (Part 2)

Dates: Jan 5 – Jan 23, 2026 (Mon–Fri)

Time: 9:00am – 12:00pm

## Future Cohort Live Training Dates

\*\*\*Seats Available for All Cohorts\*\*\*

(pending ongoing enrollment and completion of Self-Paced Part 1 of training):

- Cohort 18: February 9, 2026 - February 26, 2026
- Cohort 19: March 16, 2026 - April 2, 2026
- Cohort 20: April 20, 2026 - May 7, 2026

\*Anyone enrolling after 12/9/25 will typically be enrolled into Cohort 18 unless they want extended time to complete the self-paced training.



Peer Support  
Training and Placement  
Program



Pacific Clinics®  
Training Institute



**Partnership Opportunities:**



Employer partners interested in hiring trained CMPSS graduates



Participant referral partners who can connect eligible applicants to the program



Community engagement or outreach partners in San Diego County for networking events and training opportunities



[Submit Pacific Clinics Partner Form](#)

In partnership with





## Key Benefits to Employers:

- Access a qualified, work-ready talent pool**
- Reduce recruitment and onboarding costs**
- Improve retention with six months of post-placement support**
- Strengthen equity and community impact**
- Help shape the peer workforce pipeline**
- Help shape the peer workforce pipeline**



### ELEVATE Partner Agency Contact Form

Pacific Clinics is excited to partner with you as part of the ELEVATE Peer Support Training and Placement Program. Please complete this short form (1-2 minutes) to provide contact information for partnership coordination.

1. Agency / Organization \*

Enter your answer

2. Program or Department Name(s) (if applicable)

Enter your answer

3. What role(s) will your organization play in this partnership? (select all that apply) \*

- Participant Referral Partner
- Employer / Placement Partner
- Outreach or Community Engagement Partner
- Other (please specify more details in question #4 below if applicable)





Pacific Clinics®  
Training Institute

*Thank You*



## Contact Us

PCTI General Questions & Inquires:

[PeerCert@pacificclinics.org](mailto:PeerCert@pacificclinics.org)

ELEVATE Partner & Employer Support:

[jenna.ramsey@pacificclinics.org](mailto:jenna.ramsey@pacificclinics.org)

[ELEVATE // Pacific Clinics PSS Website](#)



In partnership with

# 2026 ELC Tentative Schedule

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month
- MS Teams Meeting
- Alternating short update calls with longer deep dives
- Bi-Annual mixers/in-person events

Date @ 2pm	Topic
January 15 <sup>th</sup>	BH Connect & Elevate (90 min)
February 29 <sup>th</sup>	Updates, reminders, and Q&A (45 min)
March 19 <sup>th</sup>	Incorporating NPs into clinical teams (90 min)
April 16 <sup>th</sup>	Updates, reminders, and Q&A (45 min)
May (TBD)	ELEVATE Job Fair and Mixer (In Person)
June 18 <sup>th</sup>	Updates, reminders, and Q&A (45 min)
July 16 <sup>th</sup>	No meeting
August 20 <sup>th</sup>	Updates, reminders, and Q&A (45 min)
September 17 <sup>th</sup>	Expanding clinical supervision capacity: successes and lessons learned (90 min)
October 15 <sup>th</sup>	Updates, reminders, and Q&A (45 min)
November 19 <sup>th</sup>	TBD
December 17 <sup>th</sup>	Employer appreciation event (In Person)



# Next Steps to Engage

- **BH Apprenticeship Network:** Fill out 5-minute form: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WRL2HJT> and attend an info session (slide 11).
- [Explore the FAQ](#) on the Social Finance website.
- **Reach out** to NAMI and Pacific Clinics to discuss your Peer training and hiring needs.



# Questions and Discussion



**Ingrid Alvarez-Ron, CNP, CMPSS**  
Program Manager  
[IngridAlvarezRon@namisd.org](mailto:IngridAlvarezRon@namisd.org)



**Jenna Ramsey**  
ELEVATE Partner & Employer Support  
[jenna.ramsey@pacificclinics.org](mailto:jenna.ramsey@pacificclinics.org)



**Elana Metz**  
Consultant  
[Elanamet@trailheadstrat.com](mailto:Elanamet@trailheadstrat.com)

