



**ELEVATE**  
Behavioral Health  
Workforce Fund

# Behavioral Health Employer Learning Community

1.15.26



# Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions (20 minutes)
- ELEVATE Behavioral Health Workforce Fund and Program Updates (20 minutes)
- Questions and Next steps (5 minutes)



# 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



# 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.



# What to Expect in 2026

- **Frequency:** Monthly meetings, 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month, 2 pm
- **Content:** Alternating short update calls (45 minutes) with longer deep dives (90 minutes) on topics of interest
- **Format:** Bi-Annual mixers/in-person events
- **Recording:** Meetings will be recorded and slides will be sent out via email with any follow-up action items

Date @ 2pm	Topic
January 15 <sup>th</sup>	Updates, reminders, and Q&A (45 min)
February 29 <sup>th</sup>	BH Connect & Elevate (90 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)





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# DISCUSSION



# Polls and Discussion Questions

Poll 1: What is your role within the organization?

Poll 2: Which ELEVATE program are you most interested in learning about/engaging with?

Poll 3: What is your or your organization's top workforce priority?

Poll 4: Which topics are you most interested in learning more about?





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# 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.

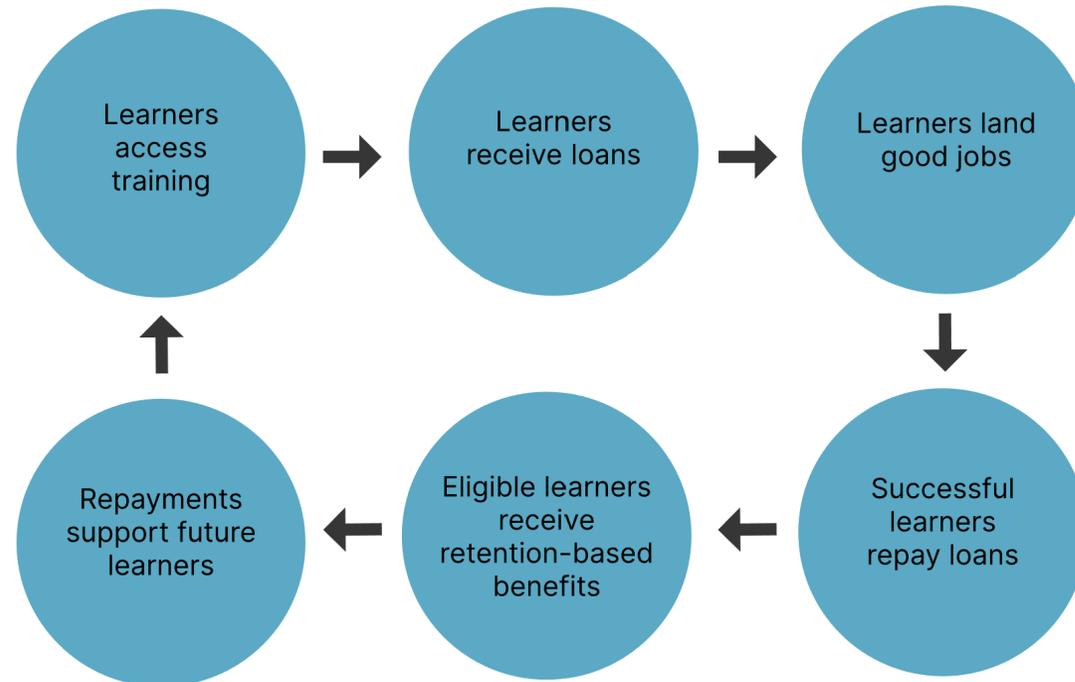


# SD Pay It Forward Loan Program

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.

## 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.

## 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



## 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.

# Updates and Highlights

- **Students have been approved for loans in the first semester** across the four inaugural programs at two schools:
  - SDSU: MSW, MFT, and ECFCC (Early Childhood and Family Clinical Counseling)
  - CSUSM: MSW
- Social Finance is **actively working to add new schools and programs** in 2026 and will share updates on these in the coming months.
- Social Finance also **welcomes recommendations** and feedback from the ELC on degree programs they should consider (based on where they often recruit from, or where their current employees typically enroll when seeking to further their studies).



# Behavioral Health Apprenticeship Network



*In Partnership with*  
FOUNDATION for CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

- 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



# Behavioral Health Apprenticeship Network



## **SUD Counselor**

LAUNCH is working closely with San Diego Workforce Partnership to launch additional cohorts with employer partners for a Substance Use Disorder Counselor apprenticeship program.

Contact Keith Gemmell, [keith@launchapprenticeship.org](mailto:keith@launchapprenticeship.org), for more information.

## **Community Health Worker & Case Manager**

Program launch in development for both occupations, in partnership with San Diego Workforce Partnership and San Diego community colleges.

## **Programs in Development**

LAUNCH is working with stakeholders to develop additional apprenticeship occupations:

- Certified Wellness Coach
- Peer Support Specialist
- Program Managers

## **Behavioral Health Apprenticeship Committee**

LAUNCH will be hosting information sessions in late February/early March for employers interested in participating in the Behavioral Health Apprenticeship Committee. Anticipated Committee launch: March/April 2026

If you are interested in learning more about and participating the Behavioral Health Apprenticeship Network, complete the [Employer Interest Form](#).



# NAMI Training Information



**1. Waitlist Opening:** The waitlist for April's cohort will open during the **fourth week of January**.

**2. Upcoming Cohorts:**

**Cohort 2:** Virtual orientation will be on **March 25th** from 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM, followed by training sessions from **April 1st to April 17th**, 2026, from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

**Cohort 3:\*\*** Virtual orientation is scheduled for **May 27th** from 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM, with training sessions taking place from June 1st to June 17th, 2026, also from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

**3. Employer Engagement:** Employers interested in hiring peer support specialists or learning more about how to recruit our graduates can contact our Employment Specialist, Anna Maker, via email at [AnnaCosimini@namisd.org](mailto:AnnaCosimini@namisd.org) or by phone at 858-338-3933. They can also request a presentation, either virtually or in person





# Upcoming Cohorts



## Cohort 19



### Self-Paced Modules (Part 1)

\*Participants must enroll by February 19, 2026, and complete all self-paced modules by March 9, 2026, in order to be eligible for Part 2.

### Live Zoom Sessions (Part 2)

**Dates: March 16, 2026 – April 2, 2026 (Mon–Fri)**

**Time: 1:00pm–4:00pm**

## Future Cohort Live Training Dates

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

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

- Cohort 20: April 20, 2026 – May 7, 2026
- Cohort 21: June 1, 2026 – June 18, 2026

\*Anyone enrolling after 2/19/26 will typically be enrolled into Cohort 20 unless they want extended time to complete the self-paced training, they can enroll for Cohort 21.



Partner Interest Form



SCAN HERE



## 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



# Next Steps to Engage

- **BH Apprenticeship Network:** Fill out 5-minute form: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WRL2HJT> and attend an info session.
- [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 Contacts



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