

Orange County Behavioral Health Integrated Plan 2026-2029

Orange County's Commitment to Action

Behavioral health challenges, including mental illness, substance use disorders, and homelessness, require coordinated action and sustained investment.

Orange County is building a behavioral health system that is

- More connected,
- More equitable, and
- More responsive

Giving every resident the opportunity to heal and thrive.



**BEHAVIORAL
HEALTH
SERVICES**

A Turning Point for Behavioral Health

Orange County is entering a new era in behavioral health care.

In March 2024, California voters approved **Proposition 1**, creating the new **Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA)**. This law represents the most significant restructuring of behavioral health funding and accountability in more than two decades.

The BHSA expands expectations for counties to build stronger, more connected systems of care that include:

- Mental health treatment
- Substance use disorder services
- Housing supports for individuals experiencing homelessness
- Measurable outcomes and statewide accountability

Orange County's **Three-Year Behavioral Health Integrated Plan (BHIP)** is our roadmap for responding to these changes and strengthening services for residents across the County.

Our County Commitment

Orange County Behavioral Health serves children, youth, adults, and older adults experiencing serious mental illness, substance use disorders, and behavioral health crises.

The County provides a full continuum of services, including:

- Community-based outpatient care
- Crisis intervention and stabilization
- Residential and recovery programs
- Housing support and outreach services

This plan reflects a clear commitment to taking action to expand access, strengthen recovery, and ensure residents receive timely, coordinated behavioral health care.

Focused Resources Toward the Greatest Need

The BHSA requires counties to prioritize services for residents facing the greatest challenges, including individuals who are:

- Experiencing homelessness or housing instability
- Justice-involved or reentering the community
- At risk of institutional care or conservatorship
- Youth involved in child welfare or juvenile justice systems

Orange County is aligning investments and services to better serve these priority populations and improve outcomes countywide.



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Listening to the Community

Orange County remains committed to ongoing partnership with community members, providers, advocates, and system partners.

This plan was shaped through extensive community engagement through January 2026.

- Approximately **1,573** residents and stakeholders participated
- Community forums, focus groups, and workgroups were held throughout the County
- Engagement occurred in multiple languages to ensure inclusion and representation

Why Funding Is Shifting Under BHSA

Proposition 1 restructures how behavioral health funds may be used statewide.

Under BHSA:

- Counties must make significant required investments in housing interventions
- Funding is more tightly aligned with treatment, crisis response, and accountability priorities
- Prevention responsibilities are shifting toward statewide public health efforts

Orange County must realign resources to meet these new statutory requirements while continuing to respond to local needs.

Impact on Longstanding Prevention Programs

As a direct result of BHSA reforms, Orange County has had to make difficult programmatic decisions.

Some long-standing prevention-focused programs previously funded through Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) are no longer allowable under the County's BHSA structure, as these prevention activities are intended to be administered through the California Department of Public Health.

This has required the County to:

- Reduce or end funding for certain prevention initiatives
- Modify other programs to comply with new requirements
- Focus limited resources on required behavioral health treatment, housing, and crisis services

While these changes are challenging, they are necessary to ensure compliance and sustainability under the new law.

Transparency, Accountability, and Next Steps

Orange County will continue public engagement as implementation moves forward.

Key upcoming milestones include:

- Public comment period: **February 23, 2026–March 27, 2026**
- Draft Plan submission to the State: **March 31, 2026**
- Public Hearing: **April 15, 2026**
- Board of Supervisors consideration: **May 19, 2026**
- Final Plan Submission deadline: **June 30, 2026**

What Orange County Is Doing: Key Actions and Investments

Orange County's Behavioral Health Integrated Plan is centered on measurable action.



Expanding Housing and Homelessness Supports

Housing is now a required component of behavioral health care under BHSA. Orange County will invest in:

- Rental subsidies and housing supports
- Interim and permanent housing development
- Homeless outreach and engagement

These efforts are expected to serve approximately **2,880 households each year**.



Strengthening Intensive Services for Highest-Need Residents

Orange County will maintain and enhance Full Service Partnerships that provide intensive community-based care for individuals with the most complex needs. These services include:

- Evidence-based treatment models
- Integrated substance use disorder treatment and medication access
- Stronger coordination between housing, crisis, and recovery supports

An estimated **4,645 individuals** may be served through these programs.



Expanding Early Intervention and Crisis Response

Orange County is investing in services that connect residents to care earlier, reduce emergency outcomes, and strengthen recovery supports, including:

- Peer outreach and engagement
- Youth and family early intervention programs
- Suicide prevention and crisis stabilization
- Wellness centers and supportive employment

These investments will serve tens of thousands of residents across Orange County.



Building the Workforce Needed to Deliver Care

Orange County is addressing workforce shortages by investing in:

- Recruitment and retention strategies
- Training and internship pipelines
- Peer support certification expansion and inclusion of community health workers
- Loan repayment and workforce development

A strong workforce is essential to delivering timely, high-quality care.