

## All County BHA Frequently Asked Questions

### What is bridge housing? (2/22/23)

Subtopic: Definitions

For purposes of the BHBH Program, “bridge housing” is defined as short- and mid-term residential settings with a goal to connect individuals to long-term housing stability. The BHBH Program uses a broad definition of “bridge housing” that may include, and may not be limited to, emergency/interim housing, rental assistance, and auxiliary funding in assisted living settings (commonly referred to as “board and care patches”). See Attachment C of the RFA for more details on bridge housing types. BHBH settings must offer supportive services that address the housing needs of participants. BHBH Programs are low-barrier and use harm reduction strategies and Housing First principles. However, when indicated, funding may be used to support recovery residences and sober living environments for individuals with significant substance use disorder needs. Bridge housing must meet the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Minimum Habitability Standards and, when possible and as applicable, should also meet Continuum of Care (CoC) Housing Quality Standards (HQS).

### What is BHBH's definition of homeless? (2/22/23)

Subtopic: Definitions

For purposes of the BHBH Program, the definition of “homeless” is based on the definition used in the Enhanced Care Management program (ECM Policy Guide, December 2022, page 11), as outlined below.

An individual or family experiencing homelessness is defined as:

- An individual or family that lacks adequate nighttime residence;
- An individual or family with a primary residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used for habitation;
- An individual or family living in a shelter;
- An individual exiting an institution into homelessness;
- An individual or family who will imminently lose housing in the next 30 days;

- Unaccompanied youth and homeless families and children and youth defined as homeless under other federal statutes; or
- Individuals fleeing intimate partner violence.

Notes on this definition:

- This definition is based on The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of “homeless,” with the following modifications:
  - If exiting an institution, individuals are considered homeless if they were homeless immediately prior to entering that institutional stay, regardless of the length of the institutionalization.
  - The time frame for an individual or family that will imminently lose housing has been extended from 14 days (HUD definition) to 30 days.

## **What is the BHBH definition of a serious behavioral health condition? (2/22/23)**

Subtopic: Definitions

The BHBH Program eligibility criteria are adapted from the Specialty Mental Health Services (SMHS) access criteria (BHIN 21-073) and the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System/Drug Medi-Cal access criteria (BHIN 21-071; BHIN 23-001), including all Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Program participants. Additionally, there are no age restrictions to be a BHBH Program participant. To be eligible for the BHBH Program–funded project, an individual must meet one of the following criteria:

- 1) The individual has one or both of the following:
  - a. Significant impairment, where impairment is defined as distress, disability, or dysfunction in social, occupational, or other important activities, including education and family relationships
  - b. A reasonable probability of significant deterioration in an important area of life functioning
  - c. A need for SMHS, regardless of presence of impairment (for individuals under age 21)

AND

The individual’s condition, as defined in a, b, and/or c, is due to either of the following:

- a. A diagnosed mental and/or substance-related or addictive disorder, according to the criteria of the current editions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) and the *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems*
- b. A suspected mental and/or substance-related or addictive disorder that has not yet been diagnosed

OR

2) The individual has at least one of the following:

- a. At least one diagnosis from the current edition of the DSM for Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders, with the exception of Tobacco-Related Disorders and Non-Substance Related Disorders
- b. At least one suspected diagnosis from the current edition of the DSM for Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders, with the exception of Tobacco-Related Disorders and Non-Substance Related Disorders

OR

3) The individual is a CARE Program participant, regardless of whether they meet the criteria in paragraphs (1) or (2), above.

## **Are individuals with substance use disorders (SUDs) eligible for BHBH? (2/22/23)**

Subtopic: Definitions

Yes, individuals with substance use disorders and/or serious mental illness are eligible for the Behavioral Health Bridge Housing. The BHBH program has defined this eligibility as Serious Behavioral Health Conditions. The definition of Serious Behavioral Health Conditions is contained in Attachment B of the RFA.

## **What are the planned funding opportunities for the BHBH Program? (2/22/23)**

Subtopic: Timeline

The BHBH Program was authorized in September 2022 under Assembly Bill (AB) 179 (Ting, Chapter 249, Statutes of 2022) and provides funding through June 30, 2027. BHBH Program funding is divided among multiple RFAs. See below for an overview of the BHBH RFA funding rounds.

<b>Release Date</b>	<b>Funding Amount</b>	<b>Eligibility</b>	<b>Type</b>
February 2023	\$907M	County Behavioral Health Agencies (BHAs)	Noncompetitive predetermined funding distribution
Spring 2023	\$50M	Tribal Entities	Competitive
Summer 2023	\$250M	BHAs and Tribal Entities	Competitive*
FY24-25	\$250M	BHAs and Tribal Entities	Competitive*

\* These competitive rounds will take into consideration activities accomplished in the initial grant period that may include but are not limited to the number of bridge housing beds active and the number of individuals served in bridge housing.

## What is the timeline for the County Behavioral Health Authority RFA? (2/22/23)

Subtopic: Timeline

This RFA focuses on the initial \$907,936,000 in funding available to county BHAs. The timeline\* for the County BHAs RFA can be found below.

County BHAs RFA released	February 22, 2023
Informational webinar	March 3, 2023, 10:00 a.m. Pacific Time (PT)
County BHAs applications due†	Accepted on a rolling basis on or before April 28, 2023, 4:00 p.m. PT
County BHA conditional awards announced	On a rolling basis beginning June 2023

Contracts executed	Within 60 days of county BHA's receipt of initial contract
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\*Timeline subject to change at The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)' discretion.

†DHCS will not accept any funding applications after the due date. Funding not applied for will be included in the competitive RFA process in summer 2023.

## **Who is eligible to apply for the County RFA? (2/22/23)**

Subtopic: Program Requirements

California's 58 county behavioral health agencies are eligible to apply for BHBH Program funding through this RFA. Counties with separate departments of mental health and substance use services may submit separate applications, but the total amount of funding requested may not exceed the total amount available for the county contained in Attachment A of the RFA.

Section III in the RFA for more information about program eligibility.

## **How do I apply? (Updated 3/15/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

The application, attachments, and instructions for submitting a completed application can be found on the BHBH website. The application portal uses SurveyMonkey Apply and will be open starting February 21, 2023. The application portal allows you to upload documents and save drafts prior to submission. Attachment D of the RFA contains a list of the application questions.

## **If I need reasonable accommodations, where can I request alternative materials? (2/22/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

DHCS will provide assistive services such as reading or writing assistance and conversion of the RFA, questions/answers, RFA addenda, or other Administrative Notices in Braille, large print, audiocassette, or computer disk, will be provided as

needed. To request copies of written materials in an alternate format, please send an email to [BHBHinfo@ahpnet.com](mailto:BHBHinfo@ahpnet.com) or call (323) 545-6202.

## **When is the BHBH application due? (2/22/23)**

Subtopic: Timeline

Applications will be accepted through the portal beginning on February 21, 2023. Applications may not be hand delivered or mailed. The deadline for all applications is April 28, 2023, 4:00 p.m. PT. DHCS will not accept any funding applications after the due date.

See Section IV of the RFA for more information about the application process and timeline.

## **Is there an informational webinar about the application process? (2/22/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

An informational webinar on Friday, March 3, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. PT will provide information about both the BHBH Program and the county BHA application. Registration is required. The webinar will be recorded and posted on the BHBH Program website.

## **Is it possible to speak with someone about my particular project? (2/22/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

To ask technical or programmatic questions or to request a consultation use this link.

## **What is the maximum grant amount that a County can apply for? (2/22/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

County BHAs may apply for any amount up to the maximum listed in Attachment A of the RFA. The maximum amount available for each county BHA is based on a \$1,000,000 minimum base per county in conjunction with the most current

Behavioral Health Subaccount distribution methodology (50 percent) and the most current Point-in-Time funding methodologies (50 percent). There is no obligation on the part of a county BHA to apply for the entire amount listed for the county. County BHAs are encouraged to collaborate, where feasible, with neighboring counties' agencies, as well as with area CoCs and other agencies that address homelessness. Counties may work directly with other counties to create regional models. Applicants will be required to submit a budget as part of their application.

## **What is the relationship between BHBH and the CARE Program? (Updated 3/15/23)**

Subtopic: Program Requirements

The BHBH program will be implemented in alignment with the CARE Program, which prioritizes BHBH resources for CARE Program participants. The passage of Senate Bill (SB) 1338 (Umberg, Chapter 319, Statutes of 2022), which established the CARE Program, adds Section 5982(b) to the Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) to stipulate that CARE Program participants be prioritized for any appropriate bridge housing funded by the BHBH Program. BHBH Program design and implementation efforts will be coordinated with The California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS) and DHCS CARE Program planning efforts to ensure counties prioritize BHBH Program funding at the local level for this population. The BHBH Program is independent of the CARE Program and would not be affected by court decisions related to the CARE Program. While counties are expected to prioritize BHBH Program funding at the local level for CARE Program participants, counties that have not begun CARE Program implementation efforts may still start BHBH Program activities. However, once the county begins CARE Program activities, the population must be prioritized for BHBH Program-funded housing. In their application, County BHAs should describe how they would plan to use the BHBH Program to support and prioritize CARE Program participants.

## **What data should applicants use to demonstrate need? (2/22/23)**

Subtopic: Program Requirements

The BHBH Program is designed to allow county BHAs to implement the most appropriate strategies for their communities while adhering to responsive best practices and using funds appropriately, as intended by law, and within the parameters of DHCS guidance. Program proposals must include baseline data and

a description of the rationale for selecting the chosen intervention(s). See Attachment E of the RFA for the types of data and information applicants will be

asked to provide to demonstrate community need.

## **How will grant announcements be made? (2/22/23)**

Subtopic: Timeline

Grant announcements will be made on a rolling basis. Successful applicants will be notified by email of a conditional award, of any resubmission requirements, or that funding has been denied. The Advocates for Human Potential, Inc. (AHP) will schedule meetings with conditional awardees to discuss the contracting process, including development of the statement of work (SOW) and payment schedule.

DHCS may provide a partial award to a county BHA if components of its application are deemed unallowable or the applicant does not provide sufficient follow-up information. Counties may accept, reject, or accept partial funding.

See Section IV of the RFA for more information about the application process and timeline.

## **What is the priority population for the BHBH program? 2/22/23**

Subtopic: Program Requirements

County BHAs must serve individuals with serious behavioral health conditions, including SMI and/or SUD, who are experiencing homelessness. See Attachment B of the RFA for definitions of serious behavioral health conditions and homelessness. Applicants must also demonstrate how they will reach historically underserved communities with BHBH funds.

In addition, with the passage of SB 1338 (Umberg, Chapter 319, Statutes of 2022), which established the CARE Program, Section 5982(b) of the Welfare and Institutions Code stipulates that CARE Program participants be prioritized for any appropriate bridge housing funded by the BHBH Program.

County BHAs should provide BHBH Program bridge housing and services throughout the county, including in rural areas, to enable people to remain in their communities.



## **When will more information on the RFA for Tribes and Tribal Entities be available? (2/22/23)**

Subtopic: Timeline

BHBH Program funding is divided among multiple RFAs. This RFA is focused on the initial \$907,936,000 in funding available to county BHAs. A competitive RFA will be released in late spring 2023 with \$50,000,000 in funding for tribal entities. In late summer 2023, a competitive RFA will be released with \$250,000,000 in funding for BHAs and tribal entities, and in fiscal year 2024-2025 another competitive RFA will be released with \$250,000,000 in funding for BHAs and tribal entities.

See Section II of the RFA for more information.

## **How will applications be evaluated? (2/22/23)3)**

Subtopic: Application Process

All applications will be reviewed by a panel of reviewers with subject matter expertise, in addition to an administrative review. Each application section will be reviewed and determined to be either “sufficient” or “requiring resubmission.” County BHAs whose applications are found to need resubmission will be contacted to schedule a consultation with AHP and will have up to 30 days from the time of notification to meet any resubmission requirements to remain eligible for BHBH Program funds. It is DHCS’s intent to work with all applicants to establish fundable applications.

See Section IV of the RFA for more information.

## **Can BHBH funding be used for infrastructure? (2/22/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

Up to 25 percent of this round of BHBH Program funding may be used for bridge housing start-up infrastructure to help county BHAs quickly establish quality settings that can help people with serious behavioral health conditions move from homelessness to appropriate bridge housing programs.

Additionally, costs per bed as part of the BHBH Program start-up infrastructure must not exceed \$75,000. Note that BHBH Program funds are not intended to support the construction of new bridge housing facilities fully.

All BHBH Program start-up infrastructure must be completed and beds made available within one year of contract execution.

See Attachment C of the RFA for additional information.

## **What are examples of allowable bridge housing start-up infrastructure expenditure? (2/22/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

Examples of allowable bridge housing start-up infrastructure costs include the initial purchase of furniture, equipment, and appliances; minor renovations to make necessary accessibility modifications for people who also have behavioral health conditions or onsite behavioral health care; the purchase and placement of tiny homes and related utility hookups and supportive facilities; costs related to facility renovations, including allowable adaptive reuse; and for bridge housing, so long as the BHA anticipates the start-up will be completed and the bridge housing brought online within one year of contract execution. These allowable expenditures must fit within the \$75,000 or less per-bed limit.

See Attachment C of the RFA for more information about infrastructure funding requirements and exceptions.

## **The SurveyMonkey Apply links in the RFA are not working. (3/9/23)**

Subtopic: Technical

The RFA on the website has been updated with corrected links. Access the SurveyMonkey Apply page.

## **Is hiring new case managers an allowable expense of BHBH Programs funds? (3/15/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

Hiring new housing case managers would be an allowable use of BHBH funds. BHBH Program grantees are expected to provide housing navigation services to assist people in identifying housing options, resources, and other services. Housing navigators that work with individuals to find, move into, and retain affordable

housing are an integral part of this program. For the purposes of the BHBH Program, the definition of housing navigation can be found starting on page 16 of the RFA. For more information on allowable BHBH Program activities, please see Attachment C of the RFA.

## **Can BHBH Program funds be spent on permanent supportive housing options? (3/15/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

Because the BHBH Program funding sunsets on June 30, 2027, counties using BHBH funding on permanent supportive housing will need to find alternate funding sources for the ongoing costs after the BHBH Program sunsets. See RFA, p. 18: “The BHBH Program could provide rental assistance or support to help people ‘bridge’ in place to permanent supportive housing. For purposes of the BHBH Program, ‘short-term’ is defined as less than 90 days and ‘mid-term’ is a period between 90 days and 2 years, with the possibility of a 1-year extension.” Counties are expected to assist BHBH Program participants in accessing sustainable, affordable, permanent housing resources during the funding period.

## **When may counties begin expending funds according to their Program Plan? (3/15/23)**

Subtopic: Timeline

The County BHA conditional awards will be announced on a “rolling basis beginning in June 2023.” The initial BHBH Program Plan will be due 30 days from the date of the conditional award. The template will be made available in advance.

Counties may begin expending funds, at their own risk, upon receipt of the conditional award and before the execution of a contract. When completing the budget, County BHAs may plan to expend some funds in FY 22-23 or leave the first year blank and show expenses beginning in FY 23-24. All funds must be expended by June 30, 2027.

## **Can BHBH Program funds be spent on rental assistance? (3/15/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

Short- or mid-term rental assistance is an allowable use of funds under the BHBH Program. The duration of rental assistance is at the discretion of the county BHA but should take into consideration the funding end date. More information on rental assistance can be found on page 20 of the RFA.

## **Can BHBH Program funds be used for services covered by Medi-Cal Community Supports? (3/15/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

BHBH Program funds are not intended to supplant existing county, state, or federal funds to provide housing or services. Instead, BHBH funds may be used: (1) to support complementary activities or enhanced investments of existing work if, for example, existing funds do not fully reimburse activities, or (2) to support additional or different services beyond those that would be funded. For example, if a Medi-Cal member is not eligible for housing-related Community Supports offered in their county but clearly needs services, their provider could use BHBH funding for these services. BHBH funds could also be used if a Medi-Cal member is eligible for housing-related Community Supports but requires services beyond what is covered by Medi-Cal. Additionally, BHBH funds can be used if an individual has already used Medi-Cal Community Supports with a “once in a lifetime” restriction. Finally, if a Medi-Cal member’s health plan does not offer needed Community Supports, BHBH funds can be leveraged.

## **What habitability standards do BHBH Program funded housing need to meet? (3/15/23)**

Subtopic: Program Requirements

All bridge housing, including tiny homes, trailers, and hotel rooms, must meet the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Minimum Habitability Standards and local zoning regulations and, when possible and as applicable, should also meet Continuum of Care (CoC) Housing Quality Standards (HQS). This does not necessarily require all utility hook-ups for individual units. In addition, BHBH Program settings are expected to provide housing navigation services to assist people in finding, moving into, and retaining sustainable, affordable, permanent housing.

## **Do counties seeking to establish multiple programs with different vendors need to submit separate applications? (3/15/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

County BHAs seeking to establish programs with different vendors should submit one application that includes all aspects of their BHBH Programs.

## **What is an allowable use of funds for Landlord Outreach and Mitigation Funds? (3/15/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

Generally, landlord outreach may include presentations, materials, campaigns, and incentives. A mitigation fund is then used to offset damages caused by BHBH Program participants, unpaid rent, or eviction costs. For a complete definition of Landlord Outreach and Mitigation Funds, please see p. 35 of the RFA.

## **Will counties be able to make budget modifications? (3/15/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

DHCS recognizes that some budgetary changes may be necessary throughout the project's life. Budget modifications and other changes to the BHBH Program Plan will be accepted only by written request and must be approved by DHCS. County BHA progress with the BHBH Program Plan will be reviewed annually.

## **Do counties need to provide estimates of the number of beds to be created and other aspects of their proposed BHBH Programs? (3/15/23)**

Subtopic: Program Requirements

County BHAs proposals should be as specific as possible. County BHAs will be able to add more specificity as they submit their BHBH Program Plan. In their proposals, County BHAs are expected to describe the planned use of BHBH Program funding, including an estimate of beds to be created. County BHAs will have the opportunity to adjust their budget with the understanding that they are

providing the most accurate information they have at the time of creating the initial budget. The expectation will be for the proposal program design and the budget to align. See Section E (p. 27) of the RFA for a list of application questions related to program design. Page 11 of the RFA also states that “Changes to the BHBH Program Plan, including the timeline, and budget modifications will be accepted only by written request and must be approved by DHCS. County BHA progress will be reviewed annually. If a county BHA is not on track to meet funding deliverables and spend its full contracted amount, DHCS reserves the right to redistribute those grant funds to other eligible county BHAs.”

## **Can BHBH Program funds be used to cover administrative or indirect costs? (3/15/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

Indirect costs are limited to 10 percent of the award. Additionally, while at least 75 percent of funds must be used for the costs of operating bridge housing, the remainder may be used for several flexible funding categories, including county behavioral health agency BHBH program implementation activities. For more information on allowable BHBH Program activities, please see Attachment C of the RFA. For more information on the Budget Instructions, please see Attachment F of the RFA.

## **Can BHBH Program funds be used for outreach and engagement staff salaries? (3/15/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

BHBH Program funds may be used for outreach and engagement staff salaries as a part of the Flexible Funding Categories. Outreach and engagement services may be carried out by staff of the BHBH site or services, but BHBH Program funding should be the funding of last resort for these services. Other funding sources, such as Medi-Cal, must be utilized first, and BHBH Program funding cannot supplant existing funding.

## **Can BHBH Program funds be used for other supports such as meal assistance? (3/15/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

County BHAs are to ensure the provision of several supports (including food/meal assistance) when creating their programming. See page 19 of the RFA: “When not covered by another funding source (due to the restrictions of non-supplantation), allowable costs for BHBH settings include necessary housing operation costs (e.g., facility rent, utilities, Wi-Fi, insurance, onsite manager, repairs, food, hygiene products).”

## **Can BHBH Program funds be used to develop Partnership activities? (3/15/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

BHBH funds may be used to support the development of partnerships. However, funding must adhere to the limitations that are outlined in the RFA and the Budget. Documentation requirements will be based on the program details and specific RFA requirements. Time to build and implement partnership activities necessary for the implementation of bridge housing may be considered direct bridge housing operations costs. Additionally, up to 25% of BHBH funds may be used in flexible funding categories that include county behavioral health agency BHBH Program Implementation, and coordination with local CoC and other stakeholders focused on serving similar target populations to expand capacity for addressing the needs of individuals with serious behavioral health conditions.

## **Can BHBH Program funds be used to match? (3/15/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

BHBH funds cannot be used as a match for Medi-Cal services, but could serve as a match for other programs or funding sources as described below:

- There is nothing that precludes Behavioral Health Bridge Housing (BHBH) Program funds from being combined with other funding sources, such as for the purchase of infrastructure, as long as program expenditures meet the identified “Allowable BHBH Program Activities” in Attachment C of the Request for Application (RFA).
- BHBH Program funds do not have a match requirement, and the BHBH Program RFA does not identify any restrictions in using BHBH funds as a match for other funding opportunities.

- In instances where other funding sources identify match opportunities, the determination of whether or not BHBH Program funds (when utilized as specified in the BHBH Program RFA) are an appropriate match source would be determined by the Agency/Department with oversight for that specific funding source.

In the event counties are proposing to use BHBH Program funds as a match source for other funding opportunities, application to ensure there is an understanding of how all BHBH Program funding will be applied to meet the identified goals. The budget that is submitted for the RFA should include only funding requested for the BHBH Program, not other programs for which the BHBH Program is serving as match.

## **Are the housing “settings” already build structures, or can the funds be used to buy/build new structures? Our housing was wiped out by the Dixie Fire (3/28/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

The BHBH program is not intended to support the development of new infrastructure. Bridge Housing may be existing settings that are leased or owned by a County Behavioral Health Agency (BHA) or a partner that can be converted into bridge housing on a faster timeline than a new capital project.

Related to BHBH budgetary specifications, 75 percent of the budget must be directed to bridge housing costs. Funds remaining after meeting this budgetary requirement may be directed to identified Flexible Funding categories. Bridge Housing Start-Up Infrastructure is identified as one of these categories. Additionally, costs per bed may not exceed \$75,000 per bed.

Examples of allowable bridge housing start-up infrastructure costs include the initial purchase of furniture, equipment, and appliances; minor renovations to make necessary accessibility modifications for people who also have behavioral health conditions or onsite behavioral health care; the purchase and placement of tiny homes and related utility hookups and supportive facilities; costs related to facility renovations, including allowable adaptive reuse; and for bridge housing.

The BHBH program does allow for a County BHA to request for an exception from some of the budgetary specifications. For more information on the exception criteria please see Attachment C- Exception Criteria on page 24 of the RFA. Those requesting exceptions must submit documentation and participate in a consultation with DHCS prior to DHCS's consideration of the exception.



## **Can BHBH funds be used for Crisis-Residential or Transitional Residential Treatment? (3/15/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

The BHBH Program funds may not be used to supplant existing federal, state, or county funds used to provide housing or services, including through Medi-Cal (e.g., Enhanced Care Management, Targeted Case Management, and Community Supports); programs funded under the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA); federally funded programs; or other state or local programs. Crisis-Residential or Transitional Residential Treatment are generally covered through other funding sources and therefore would not be allowable as a part of the BHBH Program. However, the specific related crisis housing and housing support for individuals engaged in crisis services would be allowable costs.

## **Is there a minimum or maximum stay for bridge housing? (3/27/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

There is not a minimum or maximum stay for bridge housing. County BHAs are encouraged to allow flexible lengths of stay in bridge housing settings to ensure housing navigation and placement services can take place and that individuals are exited to permanent housing to the greatest extent possible. Please see the definition for “Short-Term” and “Mid-Term” as referenced in Attachment B of the RFA for additional information.

## **Can BHBH funds be used to purchase or lease bridge housing settings and provide for staffing needs? (3/28/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

BHBH funding budgeted towards Bridge Housing Start-Up Infrastructure may be used to purchase bridge housing settings. BHBH funds budgeted towards Bridge Housing may be used to lease facilities and provide for the staff, operations and client needs. For more information about allowable expenses and budgeting allowances, see Attachment E of the RFA. For more information on start-up infrastructure fund requirements see Attachment C. Please note that all BHBH funds must be expended by June 30, 2027.

## **Are people required to participate in services to receive BHBH Program funded housing (3/28/23)**

Subtopic: Program Requirements

The BHBH Program follows Housing First principles, including providing access to housing that is not contingent on participation in services and making voluntary services available. Note that BHBH funding may be used to support recovery residences and sober living environments for individuals with significant substance use disorder needs.

## **Clarify homeless requirements and CARE program as Care not limited to homeless persons. (3/28/23)**

Subtopic: Program Requirements

BHBH Program funding must be used to serve individuals with serious behavioral health conditions, including serious mental illness and/or substance use disorder, who are experiencing homelessness. According to CARE Program requirements, specified by SB 1338 (Umberg, 2022), participants must be prioritized for BHBH Program-funded bridge housing without addressing homelessness status.

## **Do we need to register new survey monkey accounts, or can we use the one we have already for work? (3/28/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

You will be able to apply to the BHBH RFA using an existing Survey Monkey Apply account.

## **Can BHBH funds be used to support a reserve for service and operations cost of interim housing sites? (3/30/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

BHBH funds may be used to support a reserve for ongoing service and operation of interim housing sites. However, all BHBH funds MUST be expended by the program end date of June 30, 2027. Moving funds into another account for future use would not meet the program requirements.

## **Are County Behavioral Health Agencies required to participate in the Coordinated Entry System (CES) to participate in the BHBH Program? (3/30/23)**

Subtopic: Program Requirements

The BHBH program requires County Behavioral Health agencies to implement and actively participate in the HMIS in accordance with the ongoing implementation of AB 977 (Gabriel, Chapter 397, Statutes of 2021). There is no BHBH requirement that counties participate in the Coordinated Entry System (CES), however, collaboration with the CES may help County BHAs support the individuals they serve who are experiencing, or at-risk of, homelessness, including BHBH participants.

## **Will the BHBH Program team host office hours for the application? (3/30/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

There is no plan to provide office hours. However, you may request a consultation through the County RFA Helpdesk.

## **Do counties need to apply for the full funding amount? (3/30/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

No, counties do not need to apply for the full amount. Any non-contracted funds will be included in the Round 3 competitive application that will be released late Summer 2023.

## **If there is a studio with two beds or a unit with two bedrooms, would we count the operational expense by beds in the unit or studio? (3/30/23)**

Subtopic: Program Requirements

In the event that a county is using BHBH funds for interim housing, operations costs should be based on actual expenses regardless of housing type. Please also note, as referenced in Attachment C on Page 20 of the RFA, "Bridge housing may include individual units, shared living (with private or smaller-occupancy rooms), individual rooms in homes, or tiny homes."

## **Are all of the BHBH funded beds required to be online within one year of contract execution or is it just the beds that require infrastructure expenditures? (3/31/23)**

Subtopic: Program Requirements

The BHBH program requires all start-up infrastructure beds be available within one year of contract execution. Failure to expend funds expeditiously may result in a modification of BHBH funding and/or impact County eligibility in future funding rounds. Additionally, County BHAs who make beds available within 90 and 180 days will receive competitive advantages in future BHBH Program funding.

## **Do all sited include recovery residences, housing through rental assistance and/ or motels with a BHBH funded voucher need to meet ADA requirements? (3/31/23)**

Subtopic: Program Requirements

Title II of the American Disabilities Act (ADA) applies to all state and local governments and stipulates that these entities, and their contracted providers, must give "Reasonable Accommodations" to all individuals with a disability. For the BHBH

program, we recommend that you speak to your County Counsel's office to determine how your program must adhere to ADA and other regulatory requirements.

## **Could you elaborate on how we should be thinking about sober living/recovery residences in the context of this program? Who decides whether this is the appropriate available option? (3/31/23)**

Subtopic: Program Requirements

It is the County's responsibility to assess the needs and resources in your community. Appropriate placement should be client led and based on the client needs and interests. When meeting the housing first principles and supporting person-centered approaches, recovery residences should be one option but NOT be the only option available to an individual. County BHAs are encouraged to discuss the need for recovery residences with the SUD staff and contractors working with your county.

## **Does WIC, section 8255 apply to sober living/recovery residences? Can recovery residences require participation in 12 step meetings? If recovery residences are exempt from all of these rules, it seems like an and all BHBH programs could be designated recovery residences such that it is possible that there wouldn't be any BHBH housing that is low barrier or that practices housing first in a given county. Is that correct?**

Subtopic: Program Requirements

Housing provided under the BHBH Program must adhere to the Housing First requirements. Welfare and Institutions Code 8256 does expand and clarify certain aspects of the Housing First law as it relates to Sober Living and Recovery Housing

environments. We anticipate that County BHAs would need to provide services in a number of different formats in order to most effectively serve the BHBH eligible population.

**Level of detail required with application- it seems to ask for a lot of budget detail but also allows for a description of how specific projects will be identified after the application which seems to give us more time to identify specific projects. (3/31/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

County BHAs are expected to clearly describe their projects and activities with as much specificity and detail as possible in the BHBH application. Following the notice of award, the County will be asked to submit a BHBH Program Plan; the contract Statement of Work will be based on the implementation of the BHBH Program Plan. Counties may make changes to the BHBH Program Plan and budget after they are approved but per page 11 of the RFA *Changes to the BHBH Program Plan, including the timeline, and budget modifications will be accepted only by written request and must be approved by DHC*

**Can it be used for institution for Mental Disease (IMD)/Mental Health Rehabilitation Centers (MHRC)? (3/31/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

The BHBH Program funds may not be used to supplant existing federal, state, or county funds used to provide housing or services, including through Medi-Cal (e.g., Enhanced Care Management, Targeted Case Management, and Community Supports); programs funded under the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA); federally funded programs; or other state or local programs. Because Institution for Mental Disease (IMD)/Mental Health Rehabilitation Centers (MHRC) is covered through other funding sources it would not be allowable as a part of the BHBH Program.

## **When funding programs that increase the bed count, do the beds need to be within our jurisdiction or can the beds be reserved in another county for those who are from our jurisdiction? (4/6/23)**

Subtopic: Program requirements

County BHAs are encouraged to collaborate, where feasible, with neighboring counties' agencies, as well as with area Continuums of Care (CoCs) and other agencies that address homelessness. Counties may work directly with other counties to create regional models. However, please note that in the section "Bridge Housing Eligible Uses and Requirements" on page 6, the County BHA RFA requires that grantees: "Develop programs in a manner that allows for choice, enables people to stay in their 'home' communities to the extent possible, and provides for community integration in accordance with all applicable federal and state regulations." It is a best practice to keep people closer to their support networks and home environments, and these considerations should be taken into consideration when placing an individual in an environment outside of the county in which they reside.

## **Does an application need to be submitted by a county behavioral health agency employee? What if a county is working with a contractor who would like to submit on their behalf? (4/6/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

The BHBH RFA requires an applicant to sign and upload an attestation (attachment F, page 36) that states they are an authorized representative of one of the county behavioral health agencies listed in Attachment A (Page 15). This does not limit a county BHA utilizing a contractor to support the development of their application.

## **The county BHA RFA has a question with several sub-questions. If we respond to all sub questions is that enough? (4/11/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

Not necessarily. Each answer should address the main question and the sub-questions. For example, on Page 30 Section F-Management Plan, question number 1 asks the applicant to: “Describe your overall management and staffing plan for implementation of the BHBH Program.” It includes 4 sub-questions, labeled a–d. A complete response might require not only addressing the 4 sub-questions but also the initial question.

**Question number 3 of Section F-Management Plan asks for a detailed timeline, but it looks like there are only two rows. How does this work? Also, can we upload a Word or Excel document with the timeline instead of completing it on SMAApply for the timeline? (4/11/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

While it looks like there are only two rows, the form will ask if you need additional rows, and you can add more rows as needed. Alternatively, you may also upload a file that includes the same information if you prefer.

**Is the \$75,00 per bed start-up infrastructure per year? (4/11/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

No, \$75,000 is the total limit per bed, not the per year limit. Start-up infrastructure funds must be expended within the first year of the contract, as the BHBH Program requires that beds funded through the start-up infrastructure component be available to individuals within one year of contract execution. The start-up infrastructure component is meant to support the early implementation efforts needed to bring some beds online. However, not every bed supported through BHBH will necessarily require start-up infrastructure funding.

**We have a question on page 34 of the BHBH -RFA; there is a reference to a program assistance funds in the Indirect Costs section. We were unable to find a definition of program assistance funds. Would you please provide the definition? (4/19/23)**



#### Subtopic: Definitions

As described on Pages 21 and 34 of the RFA, program assistance funds refers to the funds used to remove barriers and support people with behavioral health conditions who are also experiencing homelessness in meeting their immediate housing needs (e.g., assistance getting IDs and other vital documents, transportation, food, and hygiene products) and are allowable. Funds may also be used to support individuals in completing housing applications, or for costs associated with credit reports, security deposits, utility hookups, and moderate furnishings. County BHAs must have clear policies, procedures, and protocols for managing Participant Assistance Funds prior to drawing down these funds. Participant Assistance Funds are included in the Housing Navigation tab of the budget template.

## **Could BHBH funding be used to provide housing navigation and case management to any homeless individuals with behavioral health issues, or only for clients getting BHBH-funded bridge housing? (4/24/23)**

#### Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

The BHBH Program serves individuals with serious behavioral health conditions who are experiencing homelessness. (See definitions in Attachment B of the RFA.) Outreach is one allowable use of the flexible funding categories. Housing navigation is also an allowable part of the BHBH Program, provided other funds are not available to support the navigation.

Page 21 of the RFA states that housing navigation services may either be offered as part of the services at a specific BHBH Program, as a standalone service that works with clients of multiple bridge BHBH sites, or by a housing navigation team that serves multiple housing programs. (Please note, navigation costs can only be reimbursed for BHBH clients.) The BHBH Program will be required to provide data for everyone participating in the program. A county may define individuals who meet the BHBH eligible population but are in bridge housing supported through other sources of funds as a BHBH client and provide the supportive services necessary for an individual with serious behavioral health conditions to be successful. Counties would need to assess whether homeless individuals with behavioral health issues

who are not receiving BHBH-funded bridge housing are eligible to receive services under other funding sources, because BHBH funds may not be used to supplant existing federal, state, or county funds used to provide housing or services, including through Medi-Cal (including Enhanced Care Management, Targeted Case Management, and Community Supports); programs funded under the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA); federally funded programs; or other state or local programs.

## **What are the options for counties that want to lease-to-own? (4/24/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

The goal of the BHBH program is to support the immediate needs of individuals who are homeless and have serious behavioral health conditions. The RFA does allow for either lease or owned property with the goal of providing bridge housing on a faster timeline. Each County will have different infrastructure availability and may choose different strategies to assist the BHBH program.

It is important to note that all leasing costs must be reasonable and appropriate for the area it is located, and all BHBH funds must be expended by June 30, 2027. These requirements all may impact the ability of a County BHA to operate a lease-to-own strategy. Additionally, any purchasing of property would be subject to the Start-Up infrastructure funding category, while other leasing environments would be within the Bridge Housing operations category.

## **We are looking for some guidance as to how much exception to budgetary specifications might be allowable. (4/24/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

Exceptions to the budgetary specifications will be reviewed by DHCS on a case-by-case basis. To be considered, an exception must include a strong justification and documentation that the exception is necessary. Any exception request must, at a minimum, describe “demonstrated lack of existing suitable facilities within the county that may be used for bridge housing, costs of accessibility improvements exceeding program limits, and other unusual circumstances.”

## **If our county does not apply for round 1 funding, does that preclude us from future funding rounds? (4/24/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

No, but this is the only non-competitive funding round. Any funds not applied for in round 1 will be included in the round 3 competitive application that will be released late Summer 2023. There will be a final round 4 BHBH RFA in late 2024.

## **Can you extend the application deadline? (4/24/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

No, there will not be any application extensions for Round 1 of BHBH.

## **Does our attestation need to be uploaded with a wet signature? (4/24/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

No, the signature does not need to be wet. Please note that the attestation does need to be signed by an authorized representative of the county.

## **What information is requested about people with lived experience being involved? (4/24/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

This question is asking for information on any contributions people with lived experience of homelessness and/or a serious behavioral health condition made to the county's BHBH program proposal. You do not need to provide the names of individuals, but a count of people participating would be helpful in addition to a description of their role.

## **What happens if we apply for BHBH funding with the intent to use it as a match for another funding source and we do not receive that other source? (4/24/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

The BHBH Program does not have a match requirement. Nothing precludes BHBH Program funds from being combined with other funding sources, such as for the purchase of infrastructure, as long as program expenditures meet the identified “Allowable BHBH Program Activities” in Attachment C of the Request for Application (RFA), and the other program allows BHBH to be a match.

Please note that your BHBH application should describe your back up plan should your project not be selected for the additional funding programs.

**The indirect cost calculation is not a straight percentage, as is the case in other state grants. Can you provide an example for how to calculate our indirect costs using your guidance related to modified direct costs? (4/24/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Costs

Indirect costs are defined as “general management costs necessary for the general operation of the agency, such as accounting, budgeting, payroll preparation, personnel services, purchasing, legal fees, and centralized data processing.” The indirect rate is calculated based on the program costs and excludes the pass-through funding categories (rental assistance, participant assistance funds, and landlord outreach and mitigation funds). For example, if your county has \$1,000,000 planned for the Rental Assistance program and \$900,000 is to be spent on direct funding to a property owner, then the indirect rate would be calculated based on 10% of the remaining \$100,000, or \$10,000.

$$(\$1,000,000 - \$900,000) \times 0.10 = \$10,000$$

**Could AHP provide clarity on whether Rental Assistance funding can be used for family financial housing supports, such as reimbursing room rental for a family member? (4/26/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

As part of the BHBH program, rental assistance funds can be used to support an individual's placement with their family. The policies for fraud, waste, and abuse for cases should be clearly outlined by the County. Additionally, family reunification can also be a longer-term sustainability process for individuals who have been estranged from their families while experiencing homelessness and serious behavioral health conditions. Family reunification can be an outcome of the BHBH program as a whole, not only rental assistance components, and when appropriate for the person being served can be a strategy for long-term sustainability.

## **I did not receive a link to verify the account. Is there something else I can do? (4/26/23)**

Subtopic: Application Process

Our team has resent the link email through SurveyMonkey Apply. Please check your spam or other folders inbox to find the resent link. If the resent link was still not received, please talk with your IT department as it is more than likely caught up in their spam filter.

## **Are vehicle purchases an allowable infrastructure expense? (4/26/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

No, vehicle purchases are not an allowable use of BHBH funds.

## **Can the BHBH program serve individuals who are undocumented? (4/26/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

Yes, BHBH funds can be used for individuals who are undocumented, so long as they fit the definition of the BHBH population.

# **On several tabs of the budget template there is a question regarding detail estimates. What information are you looking for in these service detail questions? (4/26/23)**

Subtopic: Budget/Allowable Use

Several of the tabs request estimates on the numbers of bed nights and individuals served for each of the BHBH Fiscal Years. These estimates will help set some baseline data for your programs. Additional information will be required for the BHBH Program Plan and could involve changes to these numbers. Because these are preliminary estimates, counties will be need to update information and data throughout BHBH implementation.