California’s Behavioral Health Crisis

Millions of Californians are not getting the care they need for mental health or substance use disorders.

About two-thirds of adults with a mental illness and two-thirds of adolescents with major depressive episodes lack treatment.

An estimated 1 in 4 adults experiences a mental health disorder in any given year.

According to the 2019 California Future Health Workforce Commission report, emergency department visits resulting in inpatient psychiatric admissions increased 30% between 2010 and 2015.

Funding hasn’t kept pace

Nationally, mental health’s share of total health spending decreased from 6.3% in 2009 to 5.5% in 2020.

Mental health professions

California doesn’t have enough providers to meet the state’s needs. By 2028, the gap will be even wider.

Supply of psychiatrists in California vs. need

By 2028:
- Unmet need gap widens by 171% as supply of psychiatrists shrinks by 34%.
- Unmet need gap widens by 51% as supply of non-MD providers shrinks by 5%.

Supply of non-MD mental health providers in California vs. need

Additional psychiatrists needed to meet demand

Additional non-MD providers needed to meet demand

Source: Healthforce Center at UCSF Caliifornia’s Current and Future Behavioral Health Workforce, February 2018; Coffman, Bates, Geyn and Spetz

Note: “Non-MD Mental Health Providers” include psychologists, licensed marriage family therapists, licensed professional clinical counselors, and licensed clinical social workers.