



## California Psychiatric Bed Annual Report: A Fragmented Behavioral Health Delivery System

**September 2018**

*Since the early 1990s, California has operated a county-based public behavioral health care delivery system. While the intent was to foster improved patient care outcomes through local flexibility and stabilized funding, this objective has, for the most part, not been met. Instead, the end result has been a fragmented delivery system that has led to unequal access to care for millions of Californians.*

*Additionally, the stigma and discrimination that often plague those who suffer from a brain disease has stymied the efforts of some behavioral health providers to add acute inpatient psychiatric beds in local communities. The phenomenon known as NIMBYism (Not in My Back Yard), combined with a persistent shortage of mental health professionals, has led to “behavioral health deserts” in some parts of the state.*

*CHA’s Psychiatric Bed Annual Report provides a focused look at the numbers and geographic distribution of acute care inpatient psychiatric facilities across the state, and provides insights into the challenges and opportunities for improving access to care for patients and their families.*

**California’s fragmented, county-based behavioral health delivery system has led to unequal access to care for millions of Californians.**

- **25** counties (45 percent of the state) have no inpatient acute-care psychiatric services. This includes a large swath of Northern California north of Sacramento. [Page 11](#)
- **42** counties (72 percent of the state) lack inpatient psychiatric services for children and adolescents. [Page 11](#)
- **56** counties (97 percent of the state) have no inpatient acute care psychiatric services for seniors. [Page 11](#)

**The availability of inpatient psychiatric services is only one part of the continuum of care. The number of inpatient beds must be balanced by a robust array of community-based outpatient programs.**

- According to behavioral health experts, there should be a minimum of one inpatient psychiatric bed for every 2,000 people. Currently, California has one bed for every 5,856 people. [Page 10](#)
- While there is good data on inpatient capacity across California, there is very little information on the availability of community-based outpatient behavioral health services statewide.