

## Building a Behavioral Health Employment Pathways Industry Partnership

An Initiative of the California Workforce Development Board

There is a critical need for behavioral health workers in California. One strategic response is to expand the use of certified Peer Support Specialists and Community Health Workers to provide outreach and intake services, individual counseling and support groups, and other services as part of multi-disciplinary teams. Worker Education & Resource Center (WERC) seeks to expand its partnership with East Bay Innovations and deepen industry partnerships specifically focused on the Behavioral Health Sector, develop a permanent Behavioral Health Industry Partners Table, create a Behavioral Health Workforce Strategy, develop and implement new entrant pathways (including a Community Health Worker Apprenticeship program), as well as advancement pathways that will be implemented and available to new entrants and incumbent workers.

This project was created by the need to create opportunities for advancement for individuals who are employed in temporary and entry level positions in behavioral health and will create pathways for advancement through experience, apprenticeships, and training. These pathways will lead to self-sufficiency and middle-class careers. As individuals improve their wages, they will be able to live near their jobs, improving climate resilience through shorter commutes. The people they serve will benefit from having workers who live in the community and have life experience relevant to client needs.

### PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- Engage at least 10 worker representatives and employer partners in two Behavioral Health Tables, one in Los Angeles and one in Alameda County. Hold 11 quarterly meetings throughout the project period.
- Enhance and expand WERC's Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Training Program with a curriculum for the targeted workforce (incumbent workers and job seekers with lived expertise such as mental health and substance use disorders or justice involvement. The curriculum will reflect employer needs related to service funding requirements.
- Develop new Behavioral Health Services workforce strategy for Los Angeles and Alameda counties by identifying entry-level positions with viable career advancement pathways supported by high road workforce training (apprenticeships and didactic learning).

### KEY PARTNERS

- LA County Department of Health Services
- LA County Department of Mental Health
- East Bay Innovations
- Center for Living and Learning
- SEIU Local 721
- Berkeley City College
- Los Angeles Dept of Economic Opportunity
- Downtown Women's Center
- HOPICS
- Los Angeles Regional Reentry Partnership (LARRP)
- Asian American Drug Abuse Program (AADAP) Development Board