

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Workforce Development & Programs

November 13th, 2025

Michelle Gibson

Deputy Director

Substance Abuse Prevention and Control Bureau,

Department of Public Health

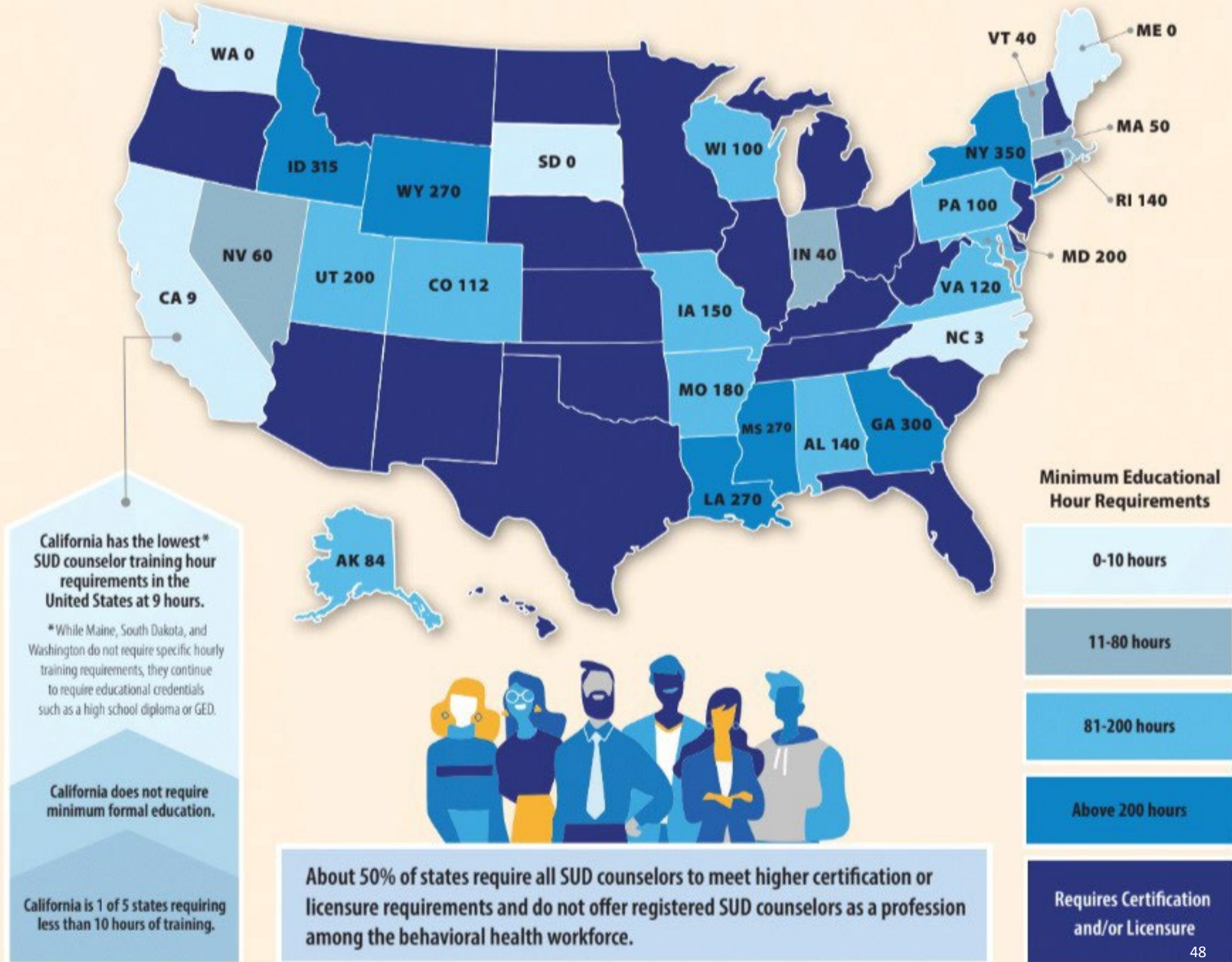
- The SUD System's Workforce is the major driver of substance use treatment service capacity.
- DHCS will update SUD Service Standards to align with the national ASAM Criteria standards in the future.
- DPH-SAPC invests heavily in workforce development and is preparing the SUD system for The ASAM Criteria 4th Edition.



Discipline	% of Total
Registered SUD Counselor	39.2%
Certified Substance Use Disorder Counselor	35.7%
Licensed Eligible Practitioner Under Supervision	12.3%
Licensed Marriage And Family Therapist	3.6%
Physician	3.4%
Licensed Clinical Social Worker	2.4%
Nurse Practitioner	1.3%
Registered Nurse	<1%
Physician Assistant	<1%
Peer Support Specialist	<1%
Licensed Clinical Psychologist	<1%
Licensed Vocational Nurses	<1%
Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor	<1%
Registered Pharmacist	<1%
Total	100.0%

SUD Counselor Training Requirements

- SAPC conducted a nationwide analysis of SUD counselor training requirements and CA is among the lowest of all states in terms of training standards.
- CA is one of only 4 other states that requires 10 hours or less of training for SUD counselors.
- ~50% of states don't even offer a training classification for SUD counselors below licensure or certification.



Alcohol or Other Drug (AOD) Counselor Educational Requirements

- LA County-sponsored bill updating California training standards for SUD counselors.
- Registered SUD counselors represent 40% of the SUD workforce in Los Angeles County and similar throughout the State.
- Prior to AB 2473, registered SUD counselors were only required to complete ONE 9-hour ethics course to deliver SUD counseling services in California
 - Lowest training standards for SUD counselors in the nation
 - 50% of states require higher certifications and don't have registered counselors as a profession
- Outlines twelve core competencies required for education requirements
- Requires 80 hours of education completed within 6 months of initial registration
- Effective January 1, 2026

Background

In 2019, SAPC received a grant from the California Community Reinvestment Program (CalCRG) to implement a strategy addressing employment barriers in communities disproportionately burdened communities from the War on Drugs policies that continues to affect poor, Black, Latinx, justice involved and people who use drugs in specific areas of LA County.

Since the CalCRG grant ended in 2021, TIP has been funded through CFCI.

Description

- [TIP](#) is an educational scholarship program for SUD Counselors offering a combination of online and in-person courses.
- SAPC contracts with Tarzana Treatment Center College (TTCC) to provide:
 - 6-month accelerated certification curriculum (including Spanish curriculum effective October 2025)
 - 255 supervised internship hours at SUD treatment agencies throughout Los Angeles County
 - Coordinate with 3 State-approved certifying bodies to support participants in becoming SUD registered
 - Dedicated technical assistance throughout program.

SAPC is supporting the implementation of the peer workforce into the SUD treatment system by investing in two distinct areas:



- 1. Scholarships** for individuals pursuing certification as Certified Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialists (CMPSSs) via the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA). Covered CalMHSA certification-related costs (application, training, exam, exam re-takes)
- 2. Support for provider agencies implementing Peer Support Services (PSS)**, which became reimbursable under the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS) on July 1, 2022.

Payment Reform & Value Based Incentives (VBI)

Optional Provider Agency **Supplemental Payments** To:

- Implement an agency-wide \$23 minimum wage for registered SUD Counselor
- Implement a baseline (e.g., health insurance, paid time off) and/or enhanced (e.g., childcare, loan repayment)
- Offer bilingual bonuses for counselors and clinicians
- Offer sign-on and/or retention bonuses for select clinician classifications
- Support start-up costs to expand MAT prescribing clinicians

ASAM 4th Edition Residential Capacity Building Pilot

- Time-limited capacity building start-up fund funds for:
 - Staffing (LPHAs which may include *psychiatrist / Psych-NPs*) providing mental health services in residential LOCs
 - Adding 3.2-WM Bed Capacity
 - *Limited to residential sites of care*
- Funding Available via Approved Implementation Plan which must include:
 - Proposed Staffing Model
 - Proposed 3.2-WM Bed Additions
- Progress Reports Monitoring Key Performance Indicators:
 - Mental health diagnoses documented via Cal-OMS
 - Count / % of Staff providing mental health services
 - Count / % Clients who received on-site mental health services
 - Units of Service for mental health services
 - 3.2-WM Bed Count / Utilization

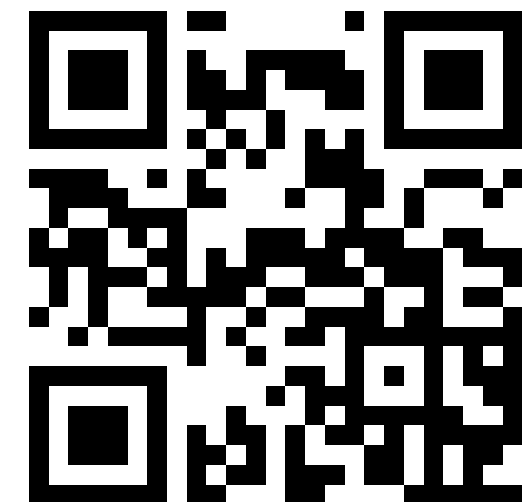
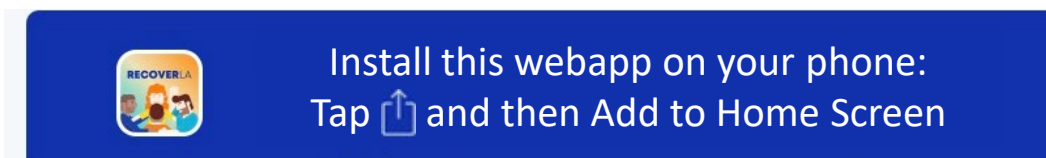
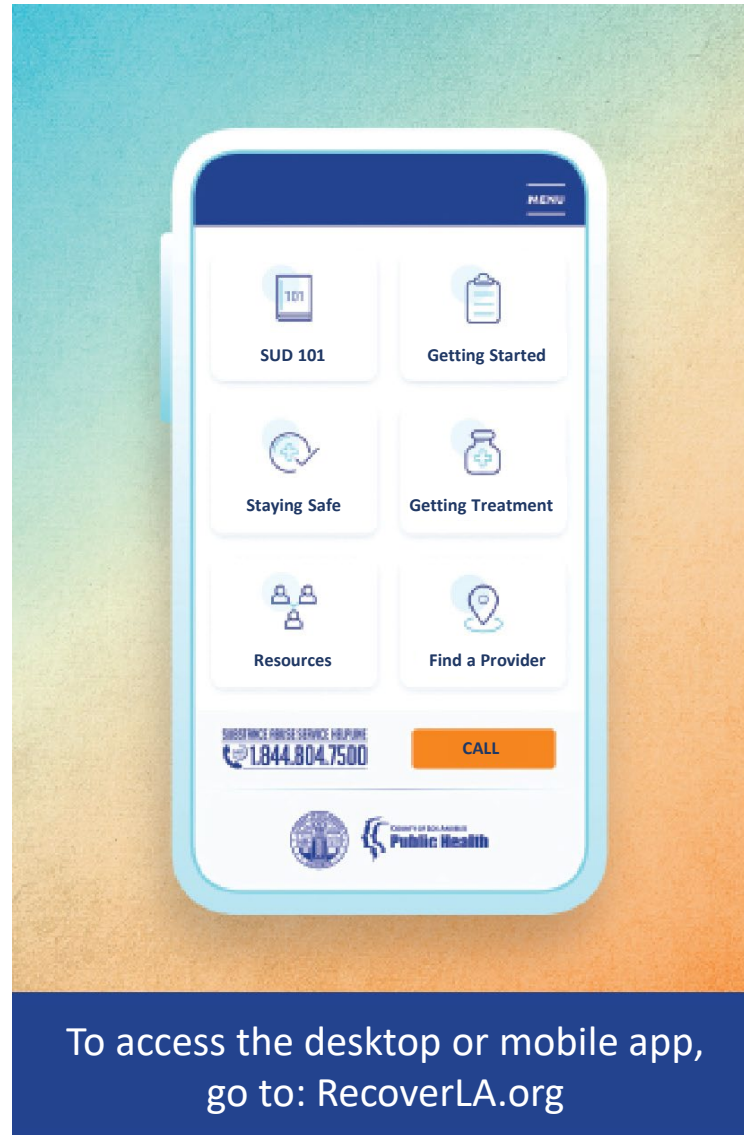
SUD 101

- Developed a general “SUD 101” training to increase the base knowledge of county partners.
- Initially placed only on SAPC’s website for public viewing
- Due to demand and with the assistance from Talent Works, SAPC reproduced this training and deployed it on 6/4/2025, making it available to **all County employees**.



- 1) Build COD capabilities within the SAPC network
- 2) Provide more training and support to increase competencies of SUD counselors and support the complexity of their work
- 3) Focus on retention of the SUD counselor workforce through improved salaries, benefits, retention bonuses, and so forth

- Free mobile app
- Provides education and resources for those seeking substance use services for themselves or others
- Available in 13 languages
- RecoverLA.org or use the QR code to access the app





Questions?