

The logo features the DHCS logo icon (a stylized 'D' with a blue and orange gradient) followed by the text 'HCS NEWS RELEASE' in a bold, white, sans-serif font, all set against a dark blue background.

# CALIFORNIA CELEBRATES GROUNDBREAKING FOR COMMUNITY WELLNESS AND PREVENTION CENTER IN OAKLAND

***Oakland Project Received Nearly \$9 Million in Grants to Improve California's Behavioral Health Infrastructure for Children and Youth***

**SACRAMENTO** — The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) joined Safe Passages (<https://safepassages.org/>) on June 6 to celebrate the groundbreaking of a new Community Wellness and Prevention Center to serve youth in the Oakland area. DHCS awarded Safe Passages \$9 million in funding to build a safe space to address gaps in mental health and substance use disorder treatment for children and youth transitioning to adulthood. The wellness center will enable Safe Passages to serve more than 4,800 community members with critical resources.



**Groundbreaking led by Safe Passages CEO Josefina Alvarado Mena-center.**

With the recently approved Proposition 1 bonds, in 2025 and 2026, even more treatment sites will be funded and built.

"Community-based and equity-driven organizations like Safe Passages are our first line of defense against the mental health crisis," said **DHCS Director Michelle Baass**. "We're pleased to support Safe Passages, and this groundbreaking continues Safe Passages' work to be an anchor institution for the community by providing innovative prevention and early intervention services to youth and their families. With Safe Passages, we can help create a healthier East Bay."

This effort, part of the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (<https://cybhi.chhs.ca.gov/>), is a historic investment that provides grant funding to construct new facilities and expand existing facilities that help children, youth, transition-age youth, and pregnant or postpartum individuals and their families with mental health and/or substance use disorders.

**SAFE PASSAGES:** Safe Passages will serve youth from before they are born to young adulthood, including Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and high-risk populations, people involved in the justice system, people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness, and children with disabilities and their families. Safe Passages offers early childhood development programs that deliver maternal services and parenting education implemented by early childhood mental health professionals, which are community-derived, research-based, and proven as best practices.

The Safe Passages Life Coaching Program serves youth ages 16-25. Other service delivery includes perinatal and early childhood mental health programs, parent-child psychotherapy, pregnant and postpartum programs, parenting programs, transitional youth development programs, individual and group counseling, and career exploration sessions. Safe Passages will also be the first children and youth wellness center in the geographic region that will provide community-derived models of mental health services, meaning they are created and implemented with significant participation from the community they serve.

"We are proud to commemorate the groundbreaking of a wellness center for our Oakland communities to engage in a wealth of supports, including mental health and wraparound services, for their children and families," said **Safe Passages CEO Josefina Alvarado Mena**. "More importantly, the wellness center will be a gathering space where we can build community, share, and grow together. We are committed to supporting every youth and family with access to the resources they need for their children to realize their full potential."

**WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:** Through the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (<https://www.infrastructure.buildingcalhhs.com/>). (BHCIP), DHCS awards eligible entities funding to construct, acquire, and expand properties and invest in mobile crisis infrastructure to further expand the range of community-based behavioral health treatment options for people with mental health and substance use disorders, who have been involved in the criminal justice system, and who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Safe Passages was funded through BHCIP Round 4: Children and Youth.

BHCIP is addressing historic gaps in the behavioral health care system and meeting the growing demand for services and support throughout the lifespans of people in need. DHCS was authorized through 2021 legislation to award \$2.2 billion in BHCIP competitive grants. In addition, DHCS will distribute roughly \$4 billion in BHCIP grants through Proposition 1 bond funds. Proposition 1 includes the Behavioral Health Services Act and Behavioral Health Bond Act of 2024; more information about Proposition 1 can be found at [mentalhealth.ca.gov](https://www.mentalhealth.ca.gov) (<https://www.mentalhealth.ca.gov/>). Behavioral Health Transformation (</BHT/Pages/home.aspx>) is DHCS' work to implement Proposition 1. DHCS holds monthly public listening sessions. Updates and recordings of the sessions are available on the

[Behavioral Health Transformation webpage \(/BHT/Pages/Stakeholder-Engagement.aspx\)](#).

**ABOUT BHCIP ROUND 4: CHILDREN AND YOUTH:** [BHCIP Round 4](#)

[\(https://www.infrastructure.buildingcalhhs.com/grantees/children-and-youth/\)](https://www.infrastructure.buildingcalhhs.com/grantees/children-and-youth/). focused not only on children and youth, but all Californians ages 25 and younger, including pregnant and postpartum women and their children and transition-age youth ages 16-25, along with their families. The 52 awards totaling \$480.5 million allow for new construction and expansion of multiple outpatient and residential facility types, including children's crisis residential programs, perinatal residential substance use disorder facilities, community wellness/youth prevention centers, and outpatient treatment for substance use disorder. For more information, please visit the [BHCIP website \(https://www.infrastructure.buildingcalhhs.com/\)](https://www.infrastructure.buildingcalhhs.com/).

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