

Comparing Requirements of New Medi-Cal Provider Types

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POLICY & STRATEGY

JULY 2025



Who is PWA?

Public Works Alliance (PWA) is a **social justice non-profit** focused on creating stronger, more equitable public systems by **shifting power and agency** to the communities they serve through **systems design** and **workforce development**.



Empowering Young People

At PWA, we aim to shift power and agency by redirecting the economic benefit of safety systems to the people they were intended to serve.

At PWA, we build health systems for people by people.

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Young people who have faced adversity make extraordinary superheroes.
They will save themselves and the rest of us if we support them properly.



Outline

01 **Provider Types**

Summary of new provider types and why this matters

02 **Requirement Comparison**

Comparison of the requirements for each provider type

03 **Can staff have more than one role?**

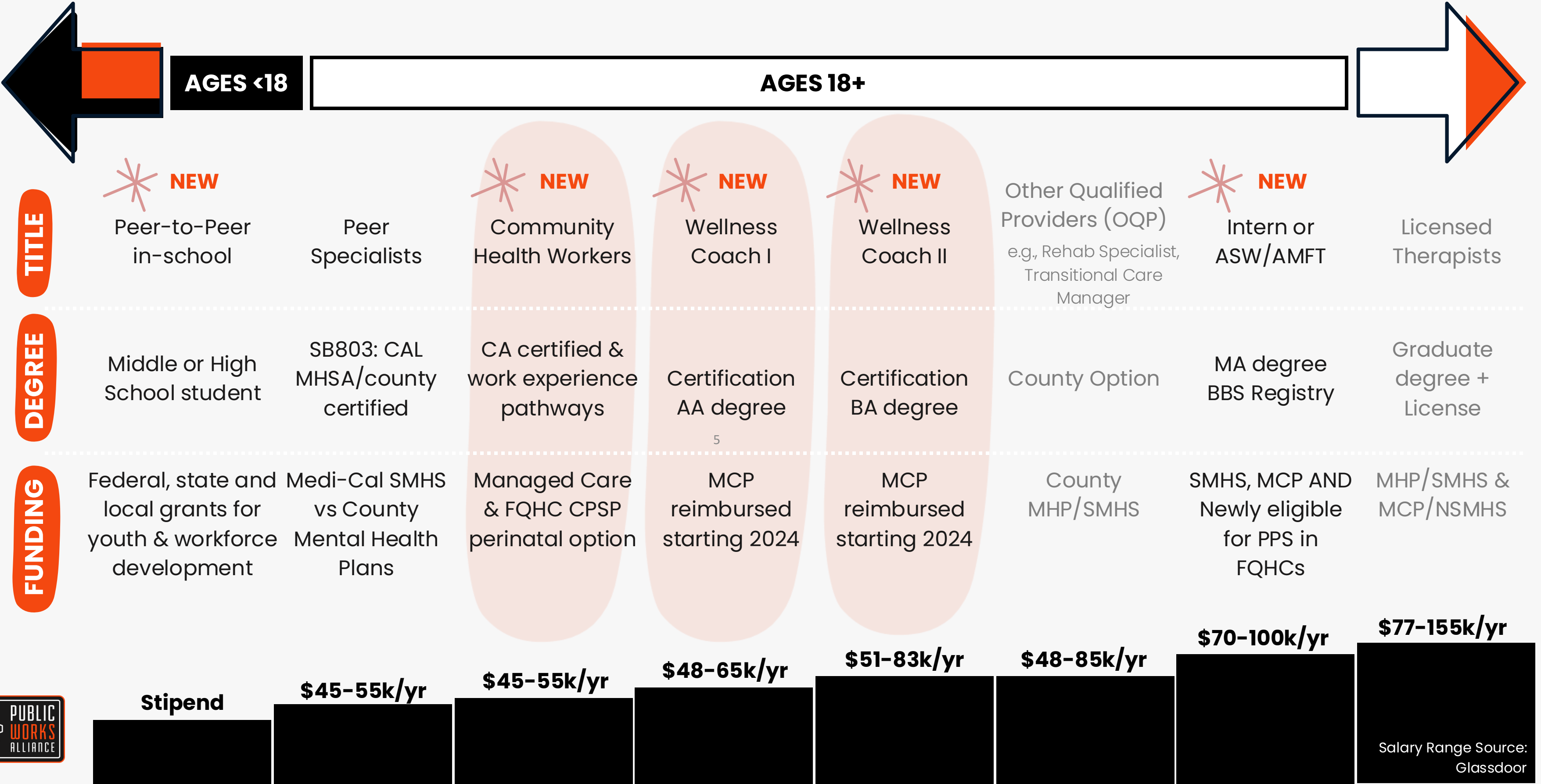
Can staff be double- or triple-certified?

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NEW Medi-Cal Reimbursable Career Pathways

Leveraging and integrating the wisdom and experience of culturally grounded providers to support Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) network of care



Changes to eligible Provider Classes in CA Medicaid program create opportunity to **build more relevant and accessible MH services**

These new provider classes help address provider shortages, diversify the workforce, promote delivery system reform, and honor lived experience by creating pathways to family-sustaining employment.

There is great wisdom and intelligence in young people that should be liberated and enlisted in service of themselves and our broken mental health system.



More Resources

Implementing these new providers and getting paid for them is not easy. PWA has developed multiple, practical resources intended to help you understand the requirements and opportunities.



[CHW Primer Slide Deck:](#) Comprehensive overview of the CHW benefit



[Issue Brief:](#) Understanding Medi-Cal's New Provider Classes in the Context of Child Welfare



[To CalAIM or not to CalAIM:](#) Comprehensive overview of the Medi-Cal CalAIM benefits



[Bifurcated Promises:](#) Summary of Medi-Cal mental health system and recommendations for simplification



Certified peers, wellness coaches and community health workers are similar but distinct. Understanding the key differences can help you decide which are best for your organization.

Key questions to keep in mind while reviewing the key differences:

1. Do any existing staff meet the requirements for multiple roles? Could any be cross-certified?
2. How difficult is it to contract with the correct payer to receive reimbursement for the provider/services?



Definitions

Certified peers

A Medi-Cal Certified Peer Support Specialist is an individual 18 and older who has self-identified as having lived experience with the process of recovery from mental illness, substance use disorder, or both, as either as a consumer of mental health or substance use treatment services, or as a parent or family member of a consumer of mental health or substance use services

<https://www.calmhsa.org/peer-certification>

California Welfare and Institutions Code, Article 1.4 (commencing with Section 14045.10), Chapter 7 of Part 3 of Division 9

Wellness Coach

Certified Wellness Coaches (Coaches) provide care to young people through prevention and early intervention services. These services support overall physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

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<https://cawellnesscoach.org>

Community Health Worker

CHWs have lived experiences similar to Medi-Cal Members and are trusted members of their community. They are 18 and older and help address chronic conditions, preventive health care needs, and health-related social issues.

The CHW Benefit was added to the Medi-Cal State Plan in 2022 and is available to both fee-for-service and managed care enrollees.

www.dhcs.ca.gov/community-health-workers



Certified Peer, Wellness Coach, and CHW Comparison

REQUIREMENT	COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER (CHW)	CERTIFIED PEER COUNSELOR (CPC)/ PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST	CERTIFIED WELLNESS COACH (CWC)
SCOPE OF PRACTICE	Medi-Cal preventive services, outreach, health education, advocacy	Non-clinical behavioral health peer support: education, engagement, advocacy, & self-help skills groups	Wellness planning, screening, coordination, individual/group support; CWC II adds coping skills
WORK SETTING EXAMPLES	Clinics, county health, community-based provider organizations, hospital emergency rooms	Community mental health, hospitals, peer-led agencies, crisis & justice settings	Schools, school-linked community providers, FQHCs (youth-focused)
CERTIFICATION REQUIRED	Yes – HCAI-approved CHW/P/R certificate (starts 2024)	Yes – Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist via CalMHSA	Yes – HCAI CWC I/II through education or workforce pathway
CERTIFYING BODY	HCAI in Future – currently MCP attestation and supervising provider must enroll in PAVE	CalMHSA under Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist rubric	HCAI via the CWC portal
PATHWAYS & EXPERIENCE	Training: complete an approved CHW program + ≥ 10 h field experience Experience: 500 verified + 2,000 attested hours OR training + 10 h field + 1 year work	80 hr training + lived experience, exam	Education: 150–400 h (Assoc) / 300–800 h (Bach); Workforce: 1,000 h/2,000 h experiences

Certified Peer, Wellness Coach, and CHW Comparison

REQUIREMENT	COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER (CHW)	CERTIFIED PEER COUNSELOR (CPC) /PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST	CERTIFIED WELLNESS COACH (CWC)
MINIMUM EDUCATION	High school diploma or equivalent (per employer)	High school diploma or GED	Associate's (CWC I) or Bachelor's (CWC II)
FIELD EXPERIENCE	≥ 10 h for Training Pathway; Experience Pathway based on work hours as above	Included as part of 80 h baseline training	Varies by CWC pathway selected above
EXAM	No exam – attestation completion	Yes – state-approved certification exam	No exam – supervisor attestation via portal
CONTINUING EDUCATION	6 h annually; certificate renewal every 2 years	20 CE hrs and renewal every 2 years, fees apply	Recertify every 2 years with CE/refresher per policy
BACKGROUND CHECK	Employer policy-dependent	Required as part of certification/employer policies	Employer policy-dependent
SUPERVISION/ PRACTICUM	Training Pathway: field experience; Experience pathway exempt	Orientation + supervised training encouraged but not mandated	Supervisor oversight required throughout experience

Medi-Cal Reimbursement Comparison

COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER (CHW)

Community Health Worker Benefit

Original Codes

- 98960 30-minute, 1:1 visit \$27.54

G Codes*

- | | |
|------------------------|---------|
| Initial 60-min visit | \$82.00 |
| Follow-up 30-min visit | \$50 |

*As of Aug. 2025, DHCS had not issued official rates for the CHW G codes but indicated that the Medi-Cal rates will be pegged to the comparable Medicare rates, which are listed here.

CERTIFIED PEER COUNSELOR (CPC) /PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST

The billing code for Peer Services is H0038.

The state published rate varies by county but for 30 minutes of H0038 (2 15-min units) peer services is about \$150.

Actual payments to providers are lower but vary in each county.

CERTIFIED WELLNESS COACH (CWC)

Certified Wellness Coach Benefit

- 0591T: Initial 30-min visit/assessment \$66.24
- 0592T: Follow up 30 min visit \$41.08

Where to look up rates:

- CHW Rates are posted on the DHCS Website here: <https://mcweb.apps.prd.cammis.medi-cal.ca.gov/rates>
- Specialty MH Rates are posted here: in the outpatient category: <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/MH/Pages/Fiscal-Year-2025-26-Medi-Cal-Behavioral-Health-Fee-Schedules-FY25-26.aspx>
- Wellness Coach rates are posted here: <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/CYBHI/Documents/CYBHI-Fee-Schedule-Scope-of-Services-Rates-and-Codes.pdf>

Wellness Coach Pathway Comparison

EDUCATION PATHWAY



- ➔ **APPLICANT TYPE**
Recent graduates
- ➔ **DEGREE PROGRAM**
 - Psychology
 - Social Work
 - Human Services
 - Addiction Studies

Certified Wellness Coach I

- ➔ **FIELD EXPERIENCE**
400 hours
(application accepted with 150 hours)

- ➔ **DEGREE**
Associate degree
from any accredited CA community college within the last 6 years

Certified Wellness Coach II

- ➔ **FIELD EXPERIENCE**
800 hours
(application accepted with 300 hours)

- ➔ **DEGREE**
Bachelor's degree
from any accredited CA college or university within the last 6 years

WORKFORCE PATHWAY



- ➔ **APPLICANT TYPE**
Professionals currently working in Wellness Coach-like roles
- ➔ **DEGREE PROGRAM**
 - Any degree

Certified Wellness Coach I

- ➔ **FIELD EXPERIENCE**
1,350 hours
of related experience

- ➔ **DEGREE**
Associate degree from any accredited college in the U.S.

Certified Wellness Coach II

- ➔ **FIELD EXPERIENCE**
2,700 hours
of related experience

- ➔ **DEGREE**
Bachelor's degree from any accredited college or university in the U.S.

 [Click to access the application link](#)

CHW Pathway Comparison

PATHWAY & REQUIREMENTS	Self-Attestation of Lived Experience	HCAI-Approved CHW/P/R Training Program or Certificate	Documented Hours	Field Experience	10 Field Hours	2000 Field Hours	Core Competency Completion
TRAINING PATHWAY	X	X	X	X	X		
WORKFORCE Pathway: Verification of Skills/Core Competencies and Past Work Experience	X		X			X	X
WORKFORCE Pathway: Prior Completion of an HCAI-Approved Training Program	X	X			X		
WORKFORCE Pathway: Reciprocity	X	X			X		

What if we already invested in Certified Peers but can't get a county contract so they can generate revenue?

Explore opportunities to **double or triple certify your Peers** as **Wellness Coaches and CHWs** if they meet the minimum qualifications.

Can peer specialists become eligible for billing Wellness Coach services?



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