



Board of Behavioral Sciences

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Gavin Newsom, Governor, State of California | Business and Consumer Services Agency | Department of Consumer Affairs

MEMORANDUM

DATE	July 20, 2026
TO	Board Members
FROM	Steve Sodergren
SUBJECT	Board of Behavioral Sciences 2026-2030 Strategic Plan

Background

At the May 2026 meeting, the Board reviewed the draft of the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan. The focus of the discussion was on including language to ensure the strategic plan incorporated efforts to protect both consumers and practitioners, especially in their work with marginalized communities. The Board emphasized the importance of providing guidance on topics such as electronic health records and responding to subpoenas. Staff were directed to incorporate these changes into the final draft and bring it back for Board approval.

The latest draft of the Strategic Plan addresses these concerns. Under the Outreach and Education Goal, Objective 5.1 has been added, which calls for the development and distribution of guidance materials outlining the professional responsibilities of registrants and licensees, as well as the rights of consumers regarding the protection and support of marginalized communities. In addition, Objective 6.2 under the Legislation and Regulation Goal directs support for legislation that enhances the protection of consumers in marginalized communities.

After the Strategic Plan is adopted, Board staff will develop tasks to achieve each objective and strategic goal. The plan will be updated and discussed at future Board and Committee meetings for progress and planning.

Recommendation

Have an open discussion of the final draft and direct staff to incorporate any amendments identified and publish the 2026-2030 Board Strategic Plan.

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Board of Behavioral Sciences

2026–2029 Strategic Plan

Adopted: [Month Day, Year]

Prepared by:

SOLID Planning Solutions

Department of Consumer Affairs

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Steve Sodergren, Executive Officer, Board of Behavioral Sciences

About the Board

The Board of Behavioral Science (Board) is responsible for the regulatory oversight of over 148,000 licensees and registrants. The Board licenses and regulates Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs), Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs), Licensed Educational Psychologists (LEPs), and Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (LPCCs). Additionally, the Board registers Associate Social Workers (ASWs), Associate Marriage and Family Therapists (AMFTs), and Associate Professional Clinical Counselors (APCCs). These registrants are required to be under the supervision of a licensed professional.

To fulfill its mandates, the Board manages its resources to license individuals and help candidates in the licensing process. It develops and administers licensure examinations and examination procedures consistent with prevailing standards for the validation and use of licensing and certification tests. It also enforces laws aimed at protecting the public from incompetent, unethical, or unprofessional practitioners, while providing education to consumers to enhance their understanding and awareness of their rights as a client.

Current law provides for 13 Board members comprised of six licensees (two licensed clinical social workers, two licensed marriage and family therapists, one licensed educational psychologist, one licensed professional clinical counselor) and seven public members. Each member of the Board is appointed for a term of four years. Eleven members are appointed by the governor and are subject to Senate confirmation. One public member is appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly, and one public member is appointed by the Senate Rules Committee.

Message from the Board Chairperson

On behalf of the California Board of Behavioral Sciences (Board), I am pleased to present our 2026–2029 Strategic Plan.

Behavioral health services are essential to the well-being of Californians. As the landscape of mental health care continues to evolve through advances in telehealth, workforce development efforts, technological innovation, and changing public expectations, the Board must remain forward-looking, responsive, and grounded in its mission: consumer protection.

This strategic plan reflects a thoughtful and collaborative effort. Board members and staff engaged in the environmental scan process by providing stakeholder input and participated in facilitated planning sessions coordinated by the Department of Consumer Affairs' Strategic Organizational Leadership and Individual Development (SOLID) Planning team. Together, we assessed our strengths, identified emerging challenges, and established clear goals to guide our work over the coming years.

The strategic plan serves as a living framework. While it sets long-term goals and measurable objectives, it is designed to remain adaptable. The Board will regularly review and update the plan to ensure we remain responsive to legislative changes, workforce trends, examination transitions, technological advancements, and the evolving needs of the public we serve.

Our strategic priorities focus on strengthening licensure pathways, enhancing enforcement consistency, modernizing operations, advancing outreach and education, and supporting organizational excellence. Each goal is grounded in our commitment to transparency, accountability, equity, and a commitment to public protection.

We invite stakeholders, including consumers, licensees, registrants, educators, and community partners, to review this strategic plan and remain engaged in our work. Your participation in Board and committee meetings, rulemaking processes, outreach efforts, and public comment opportunities strengthen our ability to fulfill our mission.

The Board is committed to continuous improvement, thoughtful regulation, and meaningful collaboration. We look forward to advancing this strategic plan together and ensuring the continued protection and well-being of all Californians.

Wendy Strack, Board Chair

Board Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission

Protect and serve Californians by setting, communicating, and enforcing standards for safe, competent, and culturally responsive mental health practices.

Vision

All Californians have access to quality mental health services.

Values

- Accountability
- Accessibility
- Diversity
- Equity
- Inclusion
- Integrity
- Professionalism

Goal 1: Administration

Build an excellent, diverse, and culturally responsive organization through proper Board governance, effective leadership, and responsible management.

- 1.1 Establish form and publication guidelines and best practices that incorporate diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility to ensure clarity and inclusiveness.
- 1.2 Transition external and internal processes to accessible and paperless formats, as appropriate.
- 1.3 Create and implement an internal and external communication structure and process to ensure staff, applicants, and stakeholders receive accurate, culturally responsive, and timely information.
- 1.4 Conduct a comprehensive review and update of procedural manuals to maintain clarity, conciseness, and cultural responsiveness.

Goal 2: Licensing

Apply licensing standards to protect consumers and allow reasonable and timely access to the profession.

- 2.1 Improve website tools and resources to support applicants and registrants by providing clear concise, and ADA-compliant information.
- 2.2 Reduce the average processing times for license and registration applications by leveraging technological solutions and staffing efficiencies.
- 2.3 Assess application fees for considerations on equity and long-term fiscal solvency.
- 2.4 Update and streamline the licensure requirements.

Goal 3: Examination

Administer fair, valid, comprehensive, culturally responsive, and relevant licensing examinations.

- 3.1 Review exam eligibility timelines to identify opportunities to improve the efficiency of the licensure process.
- 3.2 Improve recruitment efforts to build a broader, more diverse, and inclusive pool of subject matter experts for exam development.
- 3.3 Improve exam information and resources to establish expectations and assist applicants through the exam process.
- 3.4 Discuss implementing the Association of Marital and Family Therapy Regulatory Boards (AMFTRB) national examination.

Goal 4: Enforcement

Protect the health and safety of consumers through the enforcement of laws.

- 4.1 Strengthen the monitoring of violations and disciplinary trends to support informed policy development and continuous improvement.
- 4.2 Assess the continuing education process for improvements that will increase compliance and support professional competency.
- 4.3 Enhance the supervisor audit process to ensure compliance and support professional competency.
- 4.4 Enhance communication with complainants and licensees about the complaint process and outcomes to promote transparency and understanding.
- 4.5 Reduce enforcement case processing times to support efficient and consistent case resolution.

Goal 5: Outreach and Education

Engage and educate through ongoing communication about the practice and regulation of the professions and delivery of mental health care.

- 5.1 Host events for associates, educators, licensees, and supervisors to address licensure pathway questions and gather feedback.
- 5.2 Enhance outreach and communication to promote awareness and understanding of the Board's role and services while ensuring applicants, licensees, and consumers receive accurate, culturally responsive, and timely information.
- 5.1 Develop and distribute guidance materials that outline the professional obligations of registrants and licensees as well as the rights of consumers related to the protection and support of marginalized communities.

Goal 6: Legislation and Regulation

Ensure the statutes, regulations, policies, and procedures strengthen the Board's mandates and mission.

- 6.1 Pursue legislation to consolidate licensure pathways to improve clarity.
- 6.2 Pursue legislation to address the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in therapy.
- 6.3 Pursue legislation to address medication assisted therapy.
- 6.4 Review and analyze the Uniform Standards Regarding Substance-Abusing Healing Arts Licensees (SB 1441) for an alternative to default sentencing.
- 6.5 Research the scope of mental health paraprofessionals and the feasibility and effectiveness of their regulation.
- 6.6 Support legislation that strengthens the protection of consumers of marginalized communities.

Strategic Planning Process

To understand the environment in which the Board operates as well as identify factors that could impact the Board's success in carrying out its regulatory duties, the Department of Consumer Affairs' SOLID Planning Unit (SOLID) conducted an environmental scan of the Board's internal and external environments. Information for the scan was collected through interviews and online surveys distributed to the listed stakeholder groups during April 2025:

- Internal staff¹: interviews and online surveys.
- Board members: interviews.
- External stakeholders²: online survey link distributed and posted on board website.

The most significant themes and trends identified from the environmental scan were discussed by board members, board leadership, and members of the public during a strategic planning session facilitated by SOLID on February 19, 2026. This information guided the Board in the development of its strategic objectives outlined in this 2026 - 2029 strategic plan.

¹ Executive leadership, managers, and staff

² Licensee, registrant, retired licensee, related occupation, consumer, government agency, professional association/group, educational/school association/group, and others.

Board of Behavioral Sciences

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Strategic plan adopted on [type date here].

Subsequent amendments may have been made after the adoption of this plan.



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