

Department of Consumer Affairs Board of Behavioral Sciences: Certified Wellness Coach (CWC)

**Anne Powell, MSW
HCAI Office of Health Workforce Development**

November 15, 2024

Our Mission



HCAI expands equitable access to quality, affordable health care for all Californians through resilient facilities, actionable information, and the health workforce each community needs.

Our Vision



A healthier California where all receive equitable, affordable, and quality health care.

HCAI Values

Service



Equity



Innovation



Professionalism



HCAI Program Areas

Facilities: Monitor the construction, renovation, and seismic safety of California's hospitals and skilled nursing facilities.

Financing: Provide loan insurance for non-profit healthcare facilities to develop or expand services.

Workforce: Promote a culturally competent and diverse healthcare workforce.

Data: Collect, manage, analyze, and report actionable information about California's healthcare landscape.

Affordability: Improve health care affordability through data analysis, spending targets, and measures to advance value. Enforce hospital billing protections, and provide generic drugs at a low, transparent price.

Health Workforce Objectives

Develop, support and expand a health workforce that:

- Serves medically underserved areas
- Serves Medi-Cal members
- Represents the California it serves through racial and language diversity

Offer programs that provide financial support for:

- Organizations building the workforce pipeline
- Organizations expanding educational capacity
- Individuals pursuing health careers
- Organizations supporting providers and addressing retention



Outline

**Overview of Process for Creating the
Certified Wellness Coach Profession**

Detail on Certified Wellness Coach Profession



What is the need that Certified Wellness Coaches address?

The rationale for Certified Wellness Coaches

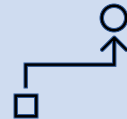


Rates of depression, hopelessness and suicide among children and adolescents has been increasing at alarming rates over the last decade.



Severe shortage of behavioral health professionals, particularly licensed non-prescribing clinicians.

[Supply and Demand Model of Behavioral Health Workforce](#)



Transform the current delivery system to place an emphasis on upstream solutions



The Certified Wellness Coach attends to the pre-clinical needs of children and youth to reduce the development of behavioral health problems that necessitate clinical intervention.

Children and Youth Mental Health Issues

Current mental health crisis among children & youth



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) call **the status of children and youth a mental health crisis.**¹



Nationally, in 2021, **42% of high school students reported experiencing depression symptoms**—a 35% increase from 4 years prior.²



Between 2018 and 2022 (the latest years for which these data are available), **suicide was the second leading cause of death for children ages 10-14 and the third leading cause of death for youth ages 15 to 24.**³



In 2023, **40% of high school students reported feeling persistently sad or hopeless, 20% considered committing suicide, 16% made a plan to commit suicide, 9% attempted suicide, and 15.2 out of every 100,000 youth ages 15 to 24 died of suicide.**^{4, 5}

References

[1. Guidance to States and School Systems on Addressing Mental Health and Substance Use Issues In Schools](#)

[2. Youth Mental Health: The Numbers | DASH | CDC](#)

[3. Suicide, NIMH](#)

[4. YRBS Data Summary & Trends Report, CDC](#)

[5. Data on Suicide and Self Harm, CDPH](#)

Certified Wellness Coaches

The 2021-2022 California Budget included a multi-billion-dollar investment and **five-year plan to transform the behavioral health (BH) system for children and youth.**

As part of that funding and plan, **HCAI was tasked to design and implement the Certified Wellness Coach workforce.**

The Certified Wellness Coach is designed to...



increase **overall capacity** for addressing children's behavioral health needs.



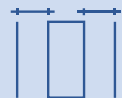
serve **vulnerable populations of children where they are.**



engage directly with children and youth through age 25.



build a **public behavioral health workforce** that better represents the diversity of California's children & youth.



fill **some of the workforce gaps** that exist today.

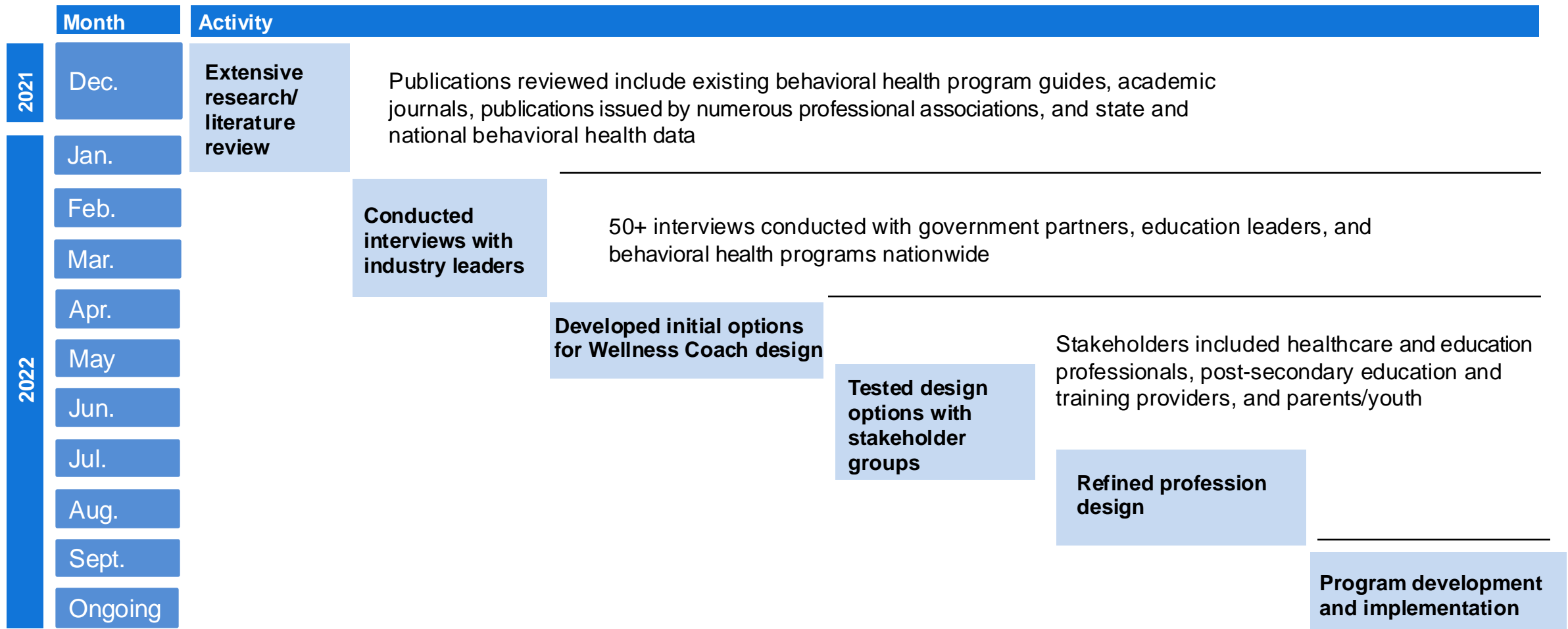


ensure the profession is both a **desirable occupation** and a **stepping-stone to more advanced roles.**

Development of Certified Wellness Coach Model

The development of the Certified Wellness Coach profession was informed by a review of published behavioral health articles, stakeholder interviews, and stakeholder design workshops

Illustrative Timeline of Certified Wellness Coach Development Process



Outline

Overview of Process for Creating the Certified Wellness Coach Profession

The Certified Wellness Coach Profession

- **Scope of Services and Competencies**
- Education
- Operating Model



Overview of Certified Wellness Coaches

Prerequisites to Enter Program



Education Program



Received Upon Completion



Services Offered



Certified Wellness Coach I

- High school diploma or equivalent
- Associate's degree
- Field/Work Experience (Education Pathway: 400 hours; Workforce Pathway: 1,000 hours)
- Wellness Coach I certification
- Focus on education related to wellness promotion, life skills, and mental health literacy
- Provide limited individual and group support with a structured curriculum

Certified Wellness Coach II

- Wellness Coach I certification or associate's degree in related field¹
- Bachelor's degree
- Field/Work Experience (Education Pathway: 800 hours; Workforce Pathway: 2,000 hours)²
- Wellness Coach II certification
- Focus on individual and group support related to wellness education, goal setting, life skills, and coping skills
- Perform the same core services as Certified Wellness Coach I with additional expertise

All Certified Wellness Coaches will:

- Serve children and youth ages 0 – 25
- Operate as part of a care team
- Offer six core services, including:
 - Wellness promotion and education
 - Screening
 - Care coordination
 - Individual support
 - Group support
 - Crisis referral
- Operate under the direction of and coordination with a Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) credentialed or licensed professional

1. Applicants can enter directly into bachelor's degree without listed prerequisites but will be required to complete Wellness Coach I training requirements throughout course of study. 2. Hours from Wellness Coach I certification apply towards total and can include hours earned as a CWC I.

Example Behavioral Health Career Lattice

Minimum Education Level Required ¹		Illustrative Behavioral Health Lattice with Example Behavioral Health Roles				
Certified and Credentialed Professionals	Certificate	Other non-BH roles	Community health worker	Peer support Specialist ²	SUD counselor	
	Associates	Certified Wellness Coach I				
	Bachelors	Certified Wellness Coach II	Social worker			
	Masters	School counselor (incl. PPS ³)	School psychologist (incl. PPS ³)	Social worker (incl. PPS ³)		
Licensed Practitioners	Licensure	Licensed clinical social worker (incl. PPS ³)	Licensed educational psychologists (incl. PPS ³)	Licensed marriage and family therapist (incl. PPS ³)	Licensed professional clinical counselor (incl. PPS ³)	Licensed school nurse
	PhD	Psychologists (incl. PPS ³)				
	MD	Psychiatrists, primary care physicians				

Select Observations

- The Certified Wellness Coach profession is designed to be an additional opportunity in the ladder, bridging the gap between roles with minimum to no training to Master’s level training
- The Certified Wellness Coach profession offers employment and training benefits to those that want to advance their careers to higher levels of the career lattice.

1. Or degree equivalent 2. Includes peer support roles (e.g., peer specialist, family support specialist, recovery coach, peer navigators)
 3. Pupil Personnel Services (credentialed) 4. Examples include organizational psychology, behavioral analysis, physician assistant, and others

Illustrative Scope of Practice for Select Allied Non-Clinical BH Professionals

Role	Description of Scope of Practice
Certified Wellness Coach I and II	Support non-clinical behavioral health needs of children and youth (ages 0 – 25) , with a focus on wellness promotion and preventative services
Peer Support Specialist	Peer Support Specialists provide recovery-oriented, culturally appropriate services that promote engagement, socialization, self-sufficiency, self-advocacy, natural supports and are trauma aware (source: CaMHSA)
Community Health Worker	Serve as a link between health and social services and the community to increase access to and improve the quality of services (source: CHCF)
Bachelor's-level Social Worker	Prepares individuals for generalist practice positions (such as casework), where they engage with clients (e.g., individuals, families, communities), assess their needs, link them to services, and monitor their progress (source: CSWE)

Services and Competencies of the Certified Wellness Coach

Services

Activities core to the Certified Wellness Coach profession

- 1 Wellness promotion and education
- 2 Screening
- 3 Care coordination and extension
- 4 Individual support
- 5 Group support
- 6 Crisis referral

Additional Competencies

Demonstrated areas of knowledge to be evaluated against during on-the-job training

- 7 Cultural responsiveness, humility, and mitigating implicit bias
- 8 Professionalism, ethics, and legal mandates
- 9 Communication
- 10 Operating in role and different environments

Example Model for Certified Wellness Coach Supervision

■ Supervision model based on stakeholder input

Area	Example Model Options		Considerations		
	More than one option may be appropriate depending on the circumstances				
Number of Individuals	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> Individual (One-to-one supervision) </div>	<div style="background-color: #4a7ebb; color: white; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> Small groups (Example: 4 coaches to 1 supervisor) </div>	One-on-one supervision may require more time from the supervisor, particularly if they are responsible for multiple coaches		
Supervision Cadence Options	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> Supervisor in all interactions </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> Daily touchpoints¹ </div>	<div style="background-color: #4a7ebb; color: white; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> Weekly touchpoints² </div>	<div style="background-color: #4a7ebb; color: white; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> As-needed touchpoints </div>	A licensing board may require supervisors to oversee a particular percentage of accrued clinical hours for a Certified Wellness Coach
Supervisor Type ³	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="background-color: #4a7ebb; color: white; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> Pupil Personnel Services (PPS)⁴ </div> <div style="background-color: #4a7ebb; color: white; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> Qualified BH provider⁵ </div> </div>		Supervisor availability may vary		
Other Considerations	<p>Supervisor qualifications (e.g., years post-licensure/credential) and competencies (e.g., cultural competence, anti-discrimination practices) may vary</p> <p>There may be clinical record-keeping laws required of the supervisee (Certified Wellness Coach) (e.g., what information should be included in the record, how long records should be maintained)</p> <p>There may be documentation requirements for supervisory activities (e.g., discussion of client progress and changes in treatment plan)</p> <p>Supervisors may be required to be employed by a particular agency/practice</p>				

1. Scheduled daily meetings for 15-20 minutes for less advanced Certified Wellness Coaches 2. Scheduled weekly meetings for 30-45 minutes 3. Suggested supervisors. Employer to determine best direct supervisor based on available resources and capacity. 4. Recommend supervisor in school settings 5. Recommended supervisor in community settings

Scope of Services for Certified Wellness Coaches (1 of 2)

Core Activity ¹	Certified Wellness Coach I Scope of Services <i>Under direction of PPS² or licensed professional</i>	Certified Wellness Coach II Scope of Services <i>Under direction of PPS² or licensed professional</i>
1 Wellness Promotion and Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver group or classroom programming (e.g., structured curriculum) focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness promotion and education (e.g., building positive relationships, bullying prevention, nutrition and exercise in relation to BH) • Mental health literacy (e.g., symptom recognition, help-seeking strategies, how to provide support) • Life skills (e.g., stress management, time management, problem-solving) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver group or classroom programming (e.g., structured curriculum) focused on activities listed in CWC I profession and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavior activation, including identifying, engaging in, and evaluating activities that promote positive emotions and well-being. • Supporting and practicing overcoming maladaptive thinking patterns identified in higher-level care. • Distraction strategies (e.g., redirection techniques, mindfulness) • Emotional regulation (e.g., emotion recognition and understanding, regulation strategies)
2 Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support youth completing behavioral health screenings (e.g., answer questions, hand-off screenings to BH professionals) • Identify and referring BH needs of youth to BH providers in school or broader organization setting • Coordinates universal screening programs in schools or other community-based organizations per SAMHSA guidelines³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates universal screening programs in school or other community-based organizations per SAMHSA guidelines⁴
3 Care Coordination and Extension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect individuals to internal and external BH resources (e.g., local/regional/national organizations, school or broader organization resources, outpatient providers, residential programs, crisis response resources) as well as social services (e.g., food or housing programs) as needed • Facilitate communication with other professionals (e.g., BH providers, school personnel) that are providing support and care to youth, including connecting individuals to licensed providers so all care team members work together and operate at the top of their license or certification • Provide additional support to providers, school, or broader organization personnel, including BH related administrative activities (e.g., billing support) and extension of non-clinical or clinical BH support 	

1. All activities will be carried out in a manner that reflects cultural concordance. 2. Pupil Personnel Services 3. Coordination refers to the support of day to day logistics, such as scheduling, communication, answering questions, and preparing materials under the direction of qualified professionals. 4. Facilitation refers to the operation of screening sessions under the direction of qualified professionals, such as providing instruction and support, collecting and recording data, and ensuring a safe and comfortable environment.

Scope of Services for Certified Wellness Coach (2 of 2)

Core Activity ¹	Certified Wellness Coach I Scope of Services <i>Under direction of PPS¹ or licensed professional</i>	Certified Wellness Coach II Scope of Services <i>Under direction of PPS¹ or licensed professional</i>
4 Individual Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide brief check-ins (~5-15 min) and scheduled meetings (~30 min) that provide emotional support and/or follow manualized curriculum that enhance wellness; individual support may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness education (e.g., basics of BH symptoms, nutrition, and exercise in relation to BH) • Goal setting/planning (e.g., increasing movement, sleep hygiene) • Life skills (e.g., stress management, time management, problem solving) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities of the Certified Wellness Coach I scope of services, and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavior activation, including identifying, engaging in, and evaluating activities that promote positive emotions and well-being. • Supporting and practicing overcoming maladaptive thinking patterns identified in higher-level care. • Distraction strategies (e.g., redirection techniques, mindfulness) • Emotional regulation (e.g., emotion recognition and understanding, regulation strategies)
5 Group Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver small group programming (e.g., structured curriculum) to enhance wellness and life skills (e.g., social-emotional skills, stress management, time management, organization, problem solving) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities of the Certified Wellness Coach I scope of services, and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance awareness of the most common BH conditions to promote understanding, reduce stigma, and foster a more informed and empathetic community
6 Crisis Referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to a standardized protocol when responding to signs of crisis in the school or broader organization setting • Identify potential risks and refer to the appropriate qualified BH provider or supervisor • Provide emotional support and engage in warm handoffs with the appropriate qualified BH provider or supervisor for youth who are waiting to be seen for crisis services 	

1. All activities will be carried out in a manner that reflects cultural concordance 2. Pupil Personnel Services

Outline

Overview of Process for Creating the Certified Wellness Coach Profession

Detail on Certified Wellness Coach Profession

- Scope of Services and Competencies
- **Education**
- Operating Model



HCAI-Designated Education Program Structure: CWC I

Program Area	Credits Earned ¹	Example Coursework & Content
Introduction to Behavioral Health	60 credits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to psychology • Introduction to social work • Introduction to case management • Child & adolescent development
Additional Education <i>(includes didactics & experiential learning to ensure individuals have the skills, knowledge, & abilities to be workforce ready)</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human behavior • Basic needs assessment • Screening • Crisis management • Disability approaches • Substance use disorder • Case management, resource linkage • Coaching and counseling frameworks² • Reflective practice (e.g., self-care, self-awareness) • Documentation basics • Cultural responsiveness, humility & implicit bias • Social determinants of health • Professionalism, ethics, legal mandates • Operating in different environments • Community outreach • Trauma-responsive care • Building effective care relationships • Self-integration in BH fields • Individual wellness plans
Field Experience		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 150 hours minimum of supervised experience including direct services, supervision, other clinical related activities, and competency evaluations⁴
Certification		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for and maintain certification through HCAI after completing program. Recertification to be completed every two (2) years

1. Credits from other programs can be transferred if they meet the education institution's requirements. 2. Includes, but not limited to, social emotional learning, active listening, relationship building, creating affirming environments, coaching practice in live settings. 3. Includes, but not limited to, focus on people of color, immigrant, LGBTQ+, Native, limited English proficiency populations. 4. Any combination of hours from field practicum, volunteer hours, and work experience qualify.

HCAI-Designated Education Program Structure: CWC II

Program Area	Credits Earned ¹	Example Coursework & Content
Certified Wellness Coach I Competency	n/a	No additional coursework required
Advanced Behavioral Health	60 credits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counseling principles • Lifespan development • Abnormal psychology • Child and family welfare • Social determinants of health
Additional Education <i>(includes didactics & experiential learning to ensure individuals have the skills, knowledge, & abilities to be workforce ready)</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced evidence-based practices (e.g., CBT, motivational interviewing, trauma-informed care) for individual and group support • Supervision • Advanced crisis management / suicide prevention² • Reflective practice (e.g., self-care, self-awareness) • Secondary trauma / trauma-informed care • Neurodivergence • Disability approaches II • Substance use disorder II
Field Experience		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 300 hours minimum of supervised experience including direct services, supervision, other clinical related activities, and competency evaluations³
Certification		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for and maintain certification through HCAI after completing program. Recertification to be completed every two (2) years

1. Credits from other programs can be transferred if they meet the education institution's requirements 2. Includes training in suicide impact assessments. 3. Hours from Wellness Coach I education apply towards the total. Any combination of hours from field practicum, volunteer hours, and work experience qualify.

Certification Requirements – Education Pathway

	Wellness Coach I	Wellness Coach II
Prerequisites for Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High school diploma or equivalent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wellness Coach I certification or Associate's in related field¹
Degree Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Associate's degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bachelor's degree
Majors Accepted	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social Work• Human Services• Addiction Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social Work• Human Services• Addiction Studies
Field Experience Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 400 hours total (150 hour minimum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 800 hours total (300 hour minimum)²

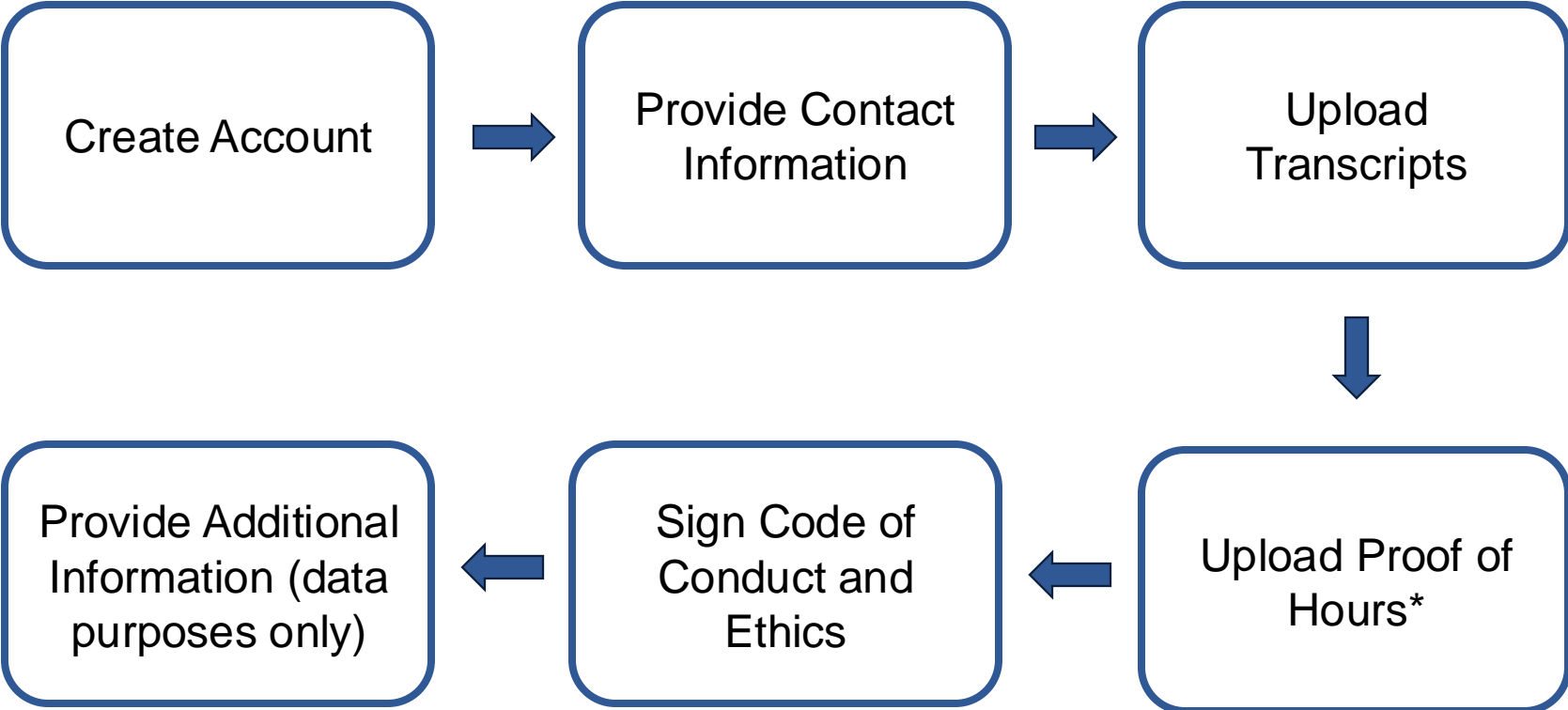
1. Applicants can enter directly into bachelor's degree without listed prerequisites but will be required to complete Wellness Coach I education requirements throughout course of study. 2. Hours from Wellness Coach I certification apply towards total.

Certification Requirements – Workforce Pathway

	Wellness Coach I	Wellness Coach II
Prerequisites for Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Professionals who are currently part of the behavioral health workforce	
Degree Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Associate's degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bachelor's degree
Majors Accepted	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Social WorkHuman ServicesAddiction StudiesChild Development/Early InterventionPsychologySociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Social WorkHuman ServicesAddiction StudiesChild Development/Early InterventionPsychologySociology
Field Experience Needed¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1,000 hoursMust be in mental health, social work, child welfare, or addiction/substance use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">2,000 hours²Must be in mental health, social work, child welfare, or addiction/substance use




1. Experience can be achieved from any combination of relevant hours from an individual's degree program, volunteer hours, and/or on the job hours, inclusive of previous experience earned within 2 years of certification. 2. Hours from Wellness Coach I certification apply towards total.

Certification Process - Overview



Example Guiding Principles & Activities for CWCCoaches

Example Activities Related to Certified Wellness Coach Professions

Example Guiding Principles	In scope	Out of Scope
 <p>Prioritize BH-related Support</p>	<p>Individual and group support for students with behavioral concerns Understanding how academic advising services are provided to best support youth Facilitating promotion/prevention programming, which can include health education related to BH</p>	<p>Assessing, diagnosing, or providing clinical intervention or treatment Providing academic advising services Facilitating system-level programming or creating specialized curricula</p>
 <p>Prioritize BH-related Administrative Support</p>	<p>Documenting activities related to BH individual and group support Scheduling BH-related appointments Coordinating/Assisting with broad BH screening tools</p>	<p>Documenting activities related to student enrollment Developing or administering the master schedule; scheduling academic advising appointments Administering academic state or interim assessments</p>
 <p>Prioritize BH-related Care Coordination</p>	<p>Connecting individuals to BH support resources (e.g., outpatient therapy, support groups) and social services as needed Coordinating with other BH providers, including around the provision of BH services, to students with IEPs</p>	<p>Providing medical referrals (e.g., ENT, PCP) Administering and coordinating individual education plans (“IEP”)</p>

Example Sites for Certified Wellness Coach Services

Example site	<div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></div> Applies across ages			
	Early childhood ¹	Elementary school ²	Middle and high school ³	Transition aged ⁴
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preschool programs Head start 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary school campus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High school campus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community colleges Four year colleges
Community-based Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> YMCA Boys and Girls Club Community centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community centers After school programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community centers Mobile crisis
Health Centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary care Tribal health programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary care clinics Tribal health programs Hospital specialty clinics Residential treatment centers Partial hospitalization programs Crisis service providers Federally qualified health centers Rural health clinics School health centers 		
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childcare and development programs AIMSS⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juvenile justice Homeless service providers Foster care service providers Home-based & home-visiting programs 		
Telehealth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology/telecommunication solutions to support specific groups (e.g., rural areas, foster care system) After-hours services and easy-to-reach services for all groups DHCS Platform 			

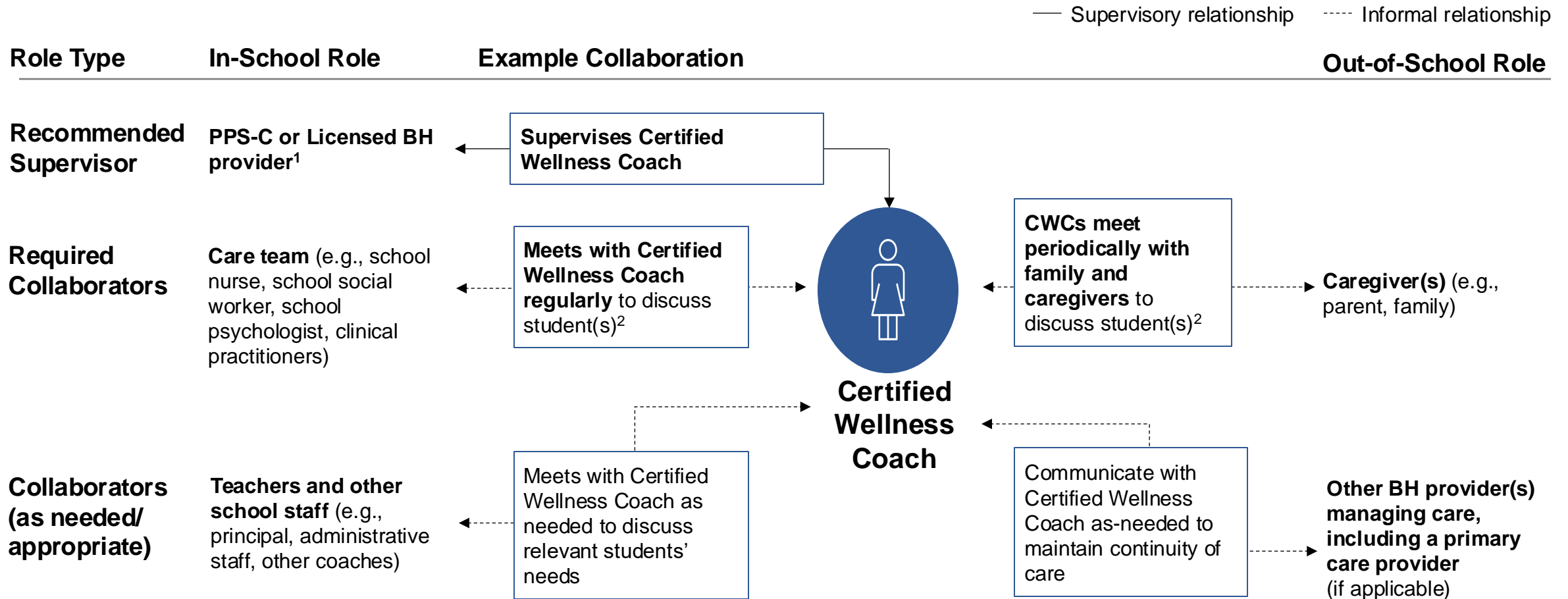
Example Criteria for Sites

- **Sites that have direct youth engagement** (e.g., elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools).
- Sites that **promote sustainable impact**, including those that:
 - **Youth frequently occupy**, would want to try behavioral health services, and/or **trust the current services and individuals**
 - **Value coach services** and offer continued mentorship and professional development
 - **Employ staff knowledgeable about behavioral health services** and motivated to integrate coaches
- Consider sites that **promote feasibility**, including those that:
 - Serve youth with **needs that are appropriate for coaches' level of education and training**
 - **Offer infrastructure that supports scalability** (e.g., telehealth)

1. Ages 0-5. 2. Elementary schools with children aged 6-12. 3. Public middle and high schools with youth aged 13-18.

4. Ages 18-25. 5. American Indian Maternal Support Services.

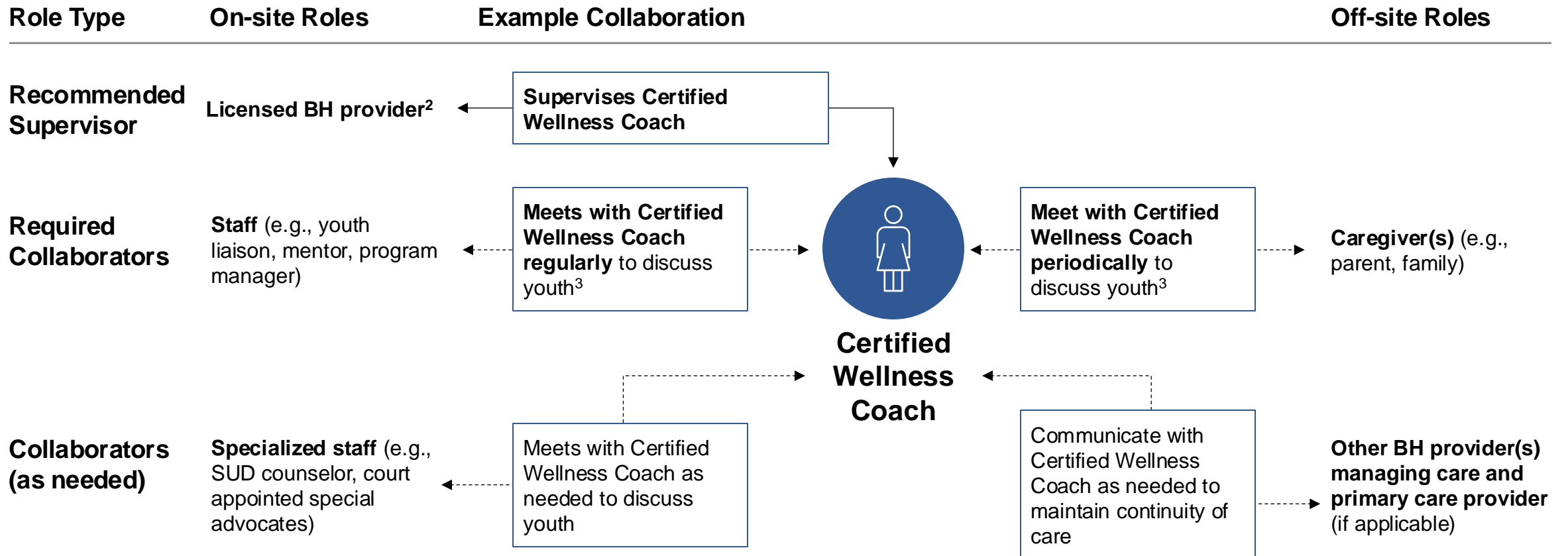
School Settings: Example BH-related Activities by Role Type



1. Includes licensed clinicians and credentialed Pupil Personnel Services professionals. Supervisor or members of care team may allocate time to several schools throughout the district and may not always be on site. 2. Student(s) include those being cared for by a care team or caregiver, only with appropriate permissions.

Community Settings¹: Example BH-related Activities by Role Type

— Supervised relationship - - - - Informal relationship



1. Settings may include health clinics, community based organizations, community centers, etc. 2. Supervisor and members of care team may allocate time to several sites and not always be on site or may not exist by setting. 3. Youth include those under the care of the care team or caregiver, only with appropriate permissions.

Sign Up to Our Newsletter!



<https://hcai.ca.gov/mailling-list/>

Contact Us!



Email WellnessCoach@HCAI.ca.gov

**#WeAreHCAI #HCAI #HealthWorkforce
#HealthFacilities #HealthInformation**

Follow Us!



Website



Twitter



Facebook



YouTube



LinkedIn

**#WeAreHCAI #HCAI #HealthWorkforce
#HealthFacilities #HealthInformation**