

From Silos to Solutions: Four Calls to Action from W2D 2025

At Words to Deeds 2025, leaders across behavioral health, justice, and housing systems came together to drive change for Californians with complex needs. This year's convening focused on how counties are moving from policy to practice.

Across two days of sessions, four clear calls to action emerged:

1. Keep People at the Center of Cross-Sector Collaboration: Effective implementation only matters if it reduces harm and improves outcomes for individuals.

Match individuals to appropriate levels of care, embed peers into treatment and reentry supports, and ensure that outcome measures reflect lived experience.

"Really keeping people at the center of all of this work that we do... at the end of the day, it's those people who we are here to serve and impact and make their lives better."

— Brenda Grealish, Executive Director, Commission for Behavioral Health

Session anchors: Opening/Closing Remarks, Session 3 (IST), Session 4 (CalAIM JIR), Session 5 (Power of Peers), Session 7 (Housing as Public Safety), Session 9 (Peer Workforce Pipeline)

2. Build Trust Across Systems: Success requires empathy and strong relationships between behavioral health, reentry, housing, and public safety systems.

Develop multi-sector collaborations (law enforcement, behavioral health, housing, and reentry), establish regular cross-agency meetings, and integrate service planning to prevent silos.

"We've had to sit down, build trust, and reimagine partnerships. It's hard work, but the results are far better for our communities." — Michelle Cabrera, Executive Director, County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California

Session anchors: Opening/Closing Remarks, Session 4 (CalAIM JIR), Session 6 (Mobile Crisis Response), Session 7 (Housing as Public Safety), Session 8 (CARE Court)

3. Bridge Policy to Implementation: Counties need tools, data, and capacity to turn policy wins into sustained impact across county systems.

Use statewide initiatives (Prop 36, CARE Court, IST, CalAIM JIR) to push for local data-sharing, outcome tracking, and real-time problem-solving. Prioritize structures that incentivize treatment participation over punishment.

A big part of what we do at Third Sector is bridge the gap from policy to implementation, from impact and idea to actual reality on the ground." — Caroline Whistler, CEO & Co-Founder, Third Sector

Session anchors: Session 1 (Data), Session 2 (Prop 36), Session 3 (IST), Session 8 (CARE Court), Opening/Closing Remarks

4. Invest in Workforce & Peers With Lived Experience: Sustainable reform depends on building a behavioral health workforce and integrating peers with lived experience.

Expand training pipelines for both licensed behavioral health staff and forensic peers, align funding streams to sustain peer roles, and embed peers into crisis response, reentry, and treatment teams.

"Peers are not an add-on. They are the glue that builds trust in systems that have historically failed people." — Elise Jones, Director, Lake County Behavioral Health Services

Session anchors: Session 3 (IST workforce needs), Session 4 (CalAIM JIR), Session 5 (Power of Peers), Session 9 (Peer workforce pipeline)

What's Next?

Review the presentations, program, attendees and more at wordstodeeds.org

Funding Partnerships:

Consider familiarizing your teams with DHCS' [Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan Incentive Payment Program \(IPP\)](#). While the IPP program ended in 2024, there may be cost-savings (or unallocated funds) within your county's managed care plan administration that may sustain any of the initiatives discussed during the Words to Deeds. More information on the work performed for the Cal-AIM IPP can be found [here](#).

Please review and consider preparing for CBH's [Innovation Partnership Fund \(IPF\)](#). The RFP will be released after the January 2026 Full Commission Meeting.

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