



# CalOptima Health

CalOptima Health  
A Public Agency  
505 City Parkway West  
Orange, CA 92868  
☎ 714-246-8400  
📞 TTY: 711  
🌐 [caloptima.org](http://caloptima.org)

## CONTACT:

Erin McHenry  
Manager, Communications  
[erin.mchenry@caloptima.org](mailto:erin.mchenry@caloptima.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## CALOPTIMA HEALTH, ORANGE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS PARTNER TO COMBAT MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

*New California program redesigns delivery system to improve access to services at schools*

**ORANGE, Calif. (September 7, 2022)** — To address the growing mental health crisis among children and teens, CalOptima Health will enter into agreements with school districts across Orange County to boost access to preventive and early intervention behavioral health care for K–12 children in public schools. We are open to participation from all school districts in the county and currently have 17 school districts that have expressed intent to participate. The collaborations are part of a new statewide initiative called the Student Behavioral Health Incentive Program (SBHIP) that continues through 2024. CalOptima Health provides health coverage to 318,000 students out of a total of 500,000 throughout the districts, but all students are eligible to receive services through SBHIP.

CalOptima Health will administer up to \$25 million in incentives for school districts that make behavioral health system improvements and open the door for Medi-Cal reimbursement of services delivered at school. The incentive dollars will fund implementation of significant new resources at the schools by placing more counselors, wellness programs, telehealth services, crisis screenings and other programs within reach.

According to the [World Health Organization](#), half of all mental health conditions start by 14 years of age. Mirroring a national trend, 45% of California youth age 12–17 report having recently struggled with mental health issues, with nearly a third of them experiencing serious psychological distress that could interfere with academic and social functioning, according to a brief from the [UCLA Center for Health Policy Research](#).

“The consequences of unaddressed mental health conditions in children often extend into adulthood,” said Michael Hunn, CEO of CalOptima Health. “Due to the pandemic, there has been a staggering increase in mental health distress among our members and their families. It is imperative that we reach students where they are and provide help to prevent and treat behavioral health issues. Building school-based health care services is a solution that addresses disparities many children face in Orange County.”

SBHIP efforts will bolster Orange County’s existing mental health initiatives and strengthen coordination among CalOptima Health, school districts, Orange County Department of Education, county behavioral health and community partners to better deliver mental health preventive care and treatment for students. Implementation of SBHIP initiatives will begin in the first quarter of 2023 with approval from the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). The goal will be to create sustainable system enhancements that stretch beyond the program’s end in December 2024.

###

### About CalOptima Health

A county organized health system, CalOptima Health provides publicly funded health care coverage for low-income children, adults, seniors and people with disabilities in Orange County, California. CalOptima Health’s mission is to serve member health with excellence and dignity, respecting the value and needs of each person. In total, CalOptima Health serves more than 921,000 members with a network of more than 10,500 primary care doctors and specialists as well as 44 acute and rehab hospitals.