

# COMPLIANCE BULLETIN

Fresno County Behavioral Health

Publication Date: 07/07/2026

## POLICY NOTICE

❖ Policy Being Summarized  
DHCS Approved Trauma  
Screening Tools for Persons  
Served Under 21 (Update)

❖ CB-058  
CB-058

❖ Effective date:  
4-1-26

❖ Policy created by:  
Bulletins and News, DBH  
Plans Bulletins and News,  
DBH Plans

❖ This notice is intended for:

- DBH Operated MH Programs
- DBH Operated SUD Programs
- DBH Administration
- Contract MH Providers
- Contract SUD Providers
- Prescribers

On January 20, 2026, the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) issued [BHIN 26-002 Access Criteria](#). This Behavioral Health Information Notice (BHIN) provided additional guidance regarding DHCS-approved youth trauma screening tools which are used to establish medical necessity for access to Specialty Mental Health Services (SMHS) for persons served under the age of 21, effective **4/1/2026**.

Per BHIN 26-002, “Covered SMHS shall be provided to members who meet **either of the following** criteria, (1) or (2) below:

The member has a condition placing them at high risk for a mental health disorder due to experience of trauma evidenced by any of the following:

(1) Scoring in the high-risk range under a trauma screening tool approved by the department, involvement in the child welfare system, juvenile justice involvement, or experiencing homelessness.

**OR**

(2) The member meets **both of the following** requirements in a) and b), below:

a. The member has **at least one** of the following:

i. A significant impairment.

ii. A reasonable probability of significant deterioration in an important area of life functioning.

iii. A reasonable probability of not progressing developmentally as appropriate.

iv. A need for SMHS, regardless of presence of impairment, that are not included within the mental health benefits that a Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan (MCP) is required to provide.

**AND**

b. The member’s condition as described in subparagraph (2) above is due to **one of the following**:

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- i. A diagnosed mental health disorder, according to the criteria of the current editions of the DSM and the ICD.
- ii. A suspected mental health disorder that has not yet been diagnosed.
- iii. Significant trauma placing the member at risk of a future mental health condition, based on the assessment of a licensed mental health professional.

If a member under age 21 meets the criteria as described in (1) above, the member meets criteria to access the SMHS delivery system; it is not necessary to establish that the member also meets the criteria in (2) above.”

[BHIN 26-002 AC Enclosure 1](#) lists the following DHCS-approved trauma screening tools:

1. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Questionnaire
2. Standard Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Trauma Module (also referred to as the National Child Traumatic Stress Network CANS – Trauma Comprehensive)
3. California Integrated Practice – Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CA IP-CANS)
4. Child and Adolescent Trauma Screen (CATS)
5. Child PTSD Symptom Scale – 6-item Screening Version (CPSS-5-Screen)
6. Child Trauma Screening (CTS)
7. Life Events Checklist for DSM-V Standard Version (LEC-5)
8. Pediatric ACEs and Related Life-Events Screener (PEARLS), including Parent-Caregiver report and self-report versions
9. UCLA Child/Adolescent PTSD Reaction Index for DSM-5 Brief Form (UCLA PTSD RI-5 BF)

For DHCS-approved trauma screening tools without a “high-risk” scoring range, a provider may use their clinical judgement to continue the assessment to decide whether a person served qualifies for SMHS. The provider shall document any and all factors that guided this judgement.

Please note that not all DHCS-approved youth screening tools listed above are eligible for Medi-Cal reimbursement. Please see [APL 23-017](#) for more information.