

# Equipping California Medicaid Staff to Lead in a Complex Environment

*Through the National Medicaid Leadership Center, the DHCS Academy prepares staff to lead effectively in an increasingly complex Medi-Cal environment.*

**M**edi-Cal, California's Medicaid program and the largest in the nation, has evolved rapidly, and with it the demands on the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). Staff are expected to navigate shifting federal and state requirements, manage complex programs, and respond to the needs of millions of Californians. Accordingly, DHCS saw the need to strengthen its internal leadership bench.

To build that capacity, the Center for Health Care Strategies joined a partnership between DHCS and Leading Resources, Inc. to create the DHCS Academy — a 10-month leadership and policy development program. An initiative of CHCS' *National Medicaid Leadership Center*, the Academy builds foundational Medicaid knowledge and practical leadership skills. Participants deepen their understanding of Medicaid nationally, Medi-Cal's structure, and the broader health care environment, while developing tools to lead through change.

The DHCS Academy has strengthened the organization's leadership pipeline by helping emerging leaders see the bigger picture and align their work with the Department's strategic goals. As a result, many of DHCS's senior leaders have advanced from within, bringing with them a shared, comprehensive understanding of the Medi-Cal program developed through the DHCS Academy. It also serves as a critical space for identifying and cultivating high-potential talent poised to drive the Department's future impact.

Since 2013, over 300 staff have graduated from the DHCS Academy, reflecting more than a decade of sustained investment in DHCS' leadership capacity. The result is a more aligned, confident, and capable workforce — one better prepared to manage complexity and deliver high-quality Medi-Cal programs and services for Californians.

## AT-A-GLANCE

**WHO:** California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)

**WHAT:** DHCS Academy

**PARTICIPANTS:** 30-35 per cohort; 300+ trained since 2013; 10-month annual cohort

**FOCUS:** Build policy skills for navigating Medi-Cal

**IMPACT:** A more aligned and strategically positioned organization prepared to advance maternal and infant health priorities statewide



**The DHCS Academy is an important part of how we prepare teams to lead in a rapidly changing health care environment. For almost 15 years, the Academy has equipped hundreds of staff and managers with the skills, relationships, and confidence to strengthen Medi-Cal.**

*- Tyler Sadwith, Medicaid Director, California Department of Health Care Services*

## About the National Medicaid Leadership Center

CHCS' *National Medicaid Leadership Center* provides leadership and capacity-building services to help Medicaid and health and human services agency leaders navigate a rapidly evolving health care landscape, drive meaningful change, strengthen programs, and improve care for the communities they serve. [Learn more](#)

National  
**Medicaid Leadership**  
Center