

WONDROS CASE STUDY

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CARE ACCESS AND INFORMATION



JUNE 2023 – ONGOING

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PROJECT SNAPSHOT



Nearly half of California's youth are struggling with their mental health and well-being. That statistic is a sobering call to action. It's also a reminder that our systems can't just react to crises. They must be built to support people before they fall through the cracks.

To help California address this challenge, and as part of its groundbreaking and transformative \$4.7B Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI), Wondros designed and launched a statewide workforce development campaign to introduce and recruit Certified Wellness Coaches—a new frontline behavioral health role focused on prevention, connection, and early support.

Wondros designed, developed, and continues to run the Certified Wellness Coach integrated media and marketing campaign statewide; it also leads direct community outreach and engagement across the state. As of July 2026, the campaign has generated 616M+ impressions, **2.5M site visits**, and **59.6K conversions** (a 2.4% visit-to-conversion rate) and contributed to the recruitment of more than **4,800 Certified Wellness Coaches** (achieving the milestone four months ahead of schedule) in 55 of California's 58 counties. CWCs serve at 745+ sites with more than 176K students already receiving support. Significantly, the campaign has also **engaged with over 700 community and stakeholder partners** to support awareness, recruitment, and hiring efforts across the state.

Campaign Website:
cawellnesscoach.org

2025 Community Narrative Video:
wdrv.it/0820870dd

Campaign Social Media Handles:

 [instagram.com/cawellnesscoach](https://www.instagram.com/cawellnesscoach)

 [facebook.com/CAWellnessCoach](https://www.facebook.com/CAWellnessCoach)

 x.com/CAWellnessCoach



Recruited over
**4,800 Wellness
Coaches** statewide



Engaged with
over **700 community and
stakeholder** partners

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Mission & Objectives

The California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI) is committed to expanding equitable access to health care for all Californians. As part of California's Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI)—the state's five-year plan to transform the behavioral health system for children and youth—HCAI was tasked to build awareness and recruitment for the Certified Wellness Coach workforce.

The Wellness Coach role is a relatively new, certified position developed to increase California's overall capacity to support the growing behavioral health needs of youth. The role was designed to help build a larger, more diverse and representative behavioral health workforce that has the training and supervision needed to engage directly with young people where they live, study and work. To become a Certified Wellness Coach, candidates must apply for certification via a dedicated certification portal (managed by a separate third-party vendor). In May 2023, HCAI awarded and Wondros began a 43-month contract to plan, develop, execute, and evaluate a statewide awareness, outreach, and recruitment campaign around the new Certified Wellness Coach (CWC) profession.

Objectives

HCAI outlined the following objectives for the CWC campaign:

- Recruit a linguistically and culturally diverse student pool to ensure a representative CWC workforce.
- Build the CWC workforce quickly by leveraging qualified or nearly qualified candidates.
- Build awareness of CWCs and related funding opportunities so that employers can plan for and hire the role.
- Provide awareness and remove stigma around CWCs so that families and youth embrace the role.



TARGET AUDIENCES

There are three primary audiences for the Certified Wellness Coach campaign: candidates, prospective employers, and to a lesser extent the general public, including parents and caregivers of school-age children, and students 13 to 25 years of age. In order to meet its objective to quickly build the CWC workforce, HCAI designed two pathways to certification—one for recent college graduates with the requisite degrees (Education Pathway), and one for professionals working in related fields (Workforce Pathway). Leveraging research and stakeholder engagement, HCAI determined that the greatest need for CWCs existed in public schools and community-based organizations (CBOs). Finally, reaching the general public serves two critical purposes: (1) Building trust in the new CWC profession among parents, caregivers and youth, and (2) Building a pipeline of future CWCs.

Target audience size varies by segment; following are approximations for each:



General public – This audience comprises California families with children (roughly one-third of households in the state), emphasizing reach in geographic areas with high Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) scores.



Employers – Given there are more than 10,000 public elementary and secondary schools in California and countless CBOs, our campaign focuses on reaching schools via Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and County Offices of Education (COEs), and emphasizes outreach to school-linked and mission-aligned CBOs.



Candidates – Due to very specific certification requirements, this is a small, highly refined audience; effectively reaching this audience requires precision targeting.



LANGUAGE & ETHNICITY

Building a Representative Workforce

To build a Certified Wellness Coach workforce that represents the populations they serve, this campaign is concentrated in geographic areas with high HPSA scores, where Wellness Coaches are most needed. The campaign website and community outreach materials were created in English and Spanish.

Candidate Education Pathway



Angelica Alvarez, 20
Mental Health Volunteer and College Student
VANGUARD (EARLY ADOPTER)
(See "Who Is Most Likely to Adopt?")

BIO

Angelica is student who aspires to become a Community Health Worker in public health. Inspired by the support her family received at the University of California San Francisco Medical Center during her grandmother's last days, she decided to become a health advocate and currently volunteers there. Sharing her client lived-experiences, she understands how health inequities are shaped by influences that are both cultural and systemic. This is why she spends her time helping community members connect with services that they might be unaware of.



"I think it's important to just have that available, you know, from from even childhood all the way to adulthood. Because a lot of our families are not aware of them or they don't know how to deal with it, you know."

GOALS

- Help others overcome mental health challenges
- Make mental health care accessible to underserved communities
- Build a rewarding career helping and serving others
- Gain professional expertise in the field of mental health

PAIN POINTS

- Lack of guidance on how to pursue a career in mental health
- Limited resources (e.g., financial) to pursue opportunities

NEEDS

- Rewarding career helping others
- Clear educational pathway
- Mentorship and scholarship support towards professionals
- Opportunities to gain professional experience

WHO INFORMS ME?

- Professors, teachers, and supervisors
- Peers (e.g., others in her professional field) and friends
- Parents, siblings, and family members
- Social media

WHERE AM I?

- At college
- In classrooms
- At the library studying
- In hospitals volunteering
- With friends hanging out
- Home: watching TV, spending time with family, researching or doing homework, watching TikTok or talking to friends on social media

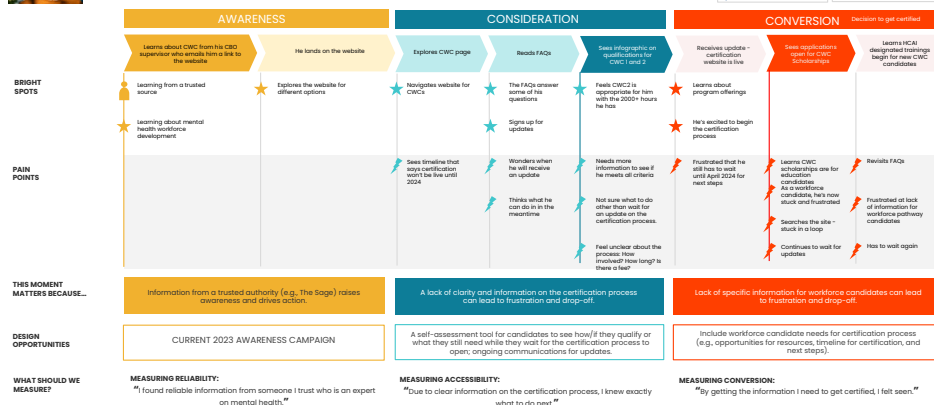
Examples of a candidate persona and journey map developed to aid in the design of the campaign.

CANDIDATE JOURNEY MAP



Workforce pathway candidates like Curtis may be recent graduates, or have been working in related fields and are likely still early in their careers and interested in new opportunities. ("For mid- or late-career people, despite having qualifying experience, the starting salary for CWC would likely be a barrier to entry.")

Curtis Williams, 27
Occupation: Behavioral Health Counselor, has a BA in Social Work



Key Facts from Background Research and Analysis

Wondros, in collaboration with our research and evaluation partner, NORC, conducted the following mix of qualitative and quantitative background research: (1) Review and synthesis of existing research and literature, (2) In-depth interviews, and (3) a Pulse survey to gauge pre-campaign awareness and understanding.

The following key facts and insights emerged:

1

A disproportionate share of California's children live in areas characterized by a lack of many of the social determinants of mental health.

2

Youth-led stigma reduction can increase acceptance of Wellness Coaches.

3

Wellness Coaches can act as cultural brokers in navigating inequities and barriers in mental health care.

4

LEAs with mental health infrastructure are best-positioned to be early adopters of Wellness Coaches.

5

Parents feel supported knowing their child could talk to a Wellness Coach.

6

Learning coping and life skills were by far perceived as the biggest benefits for youth having access to a Wellness Coach, followed by preventing crises.

7

Understanding/respecting cultural differences was highest-ranked as most important for Wellness Coaches to bring to the role, followed by communicating with youth and professionals.

8

Making a difference was by far the highest-ranked among the top reasons someone might want to become a Wellness Coach.

9

Someone in a role similar to a Wellness Coach was the top choice as the most convincing spokesperson to encourage candidates to become a Wellness Coach, followed by a student struggling with MEB challenges.

10

Respondents to the survey felt strongly that community-based organizations would be the most trusted information source for potential candidates, followed by college counselors and friends.

11

A website, followed by social media, and a college counselor were the highest-rated as the best place to send potential Wellness Coach candidates for more information about the role.

12

Connecting with/supporting youth, making a difference, and having a rewarding/fulfilling position were among the top open-ended themes for why someone should become a Wellness Coach.

PROJECT APPROACH

An innovative, nimble, and solutions-oriented approach.

Given the critical need to provide more mental health resources for California's children and youth, the Certified Wellness Coach campaign was initiated while the CWC program was still in development. This required an innovative, nimble, and solutions-oriented approach. Based on HCAI's need to launch the campaign quickly, Wondros proposed a phased approach, which is a solution we've successfully employed on other urgent public health projects, such as our Federal COVID Response campaigns. The phased strategy entails: (1) Leveraging existing research to develop an initial communications strategy, which informs a Phase 1 (pre-launch) creative brief and initial creative assets, (2) starting with media channels that can be up and running quickly, namely radio, paid social (Meta), and paid search, and (3) simultaneously conducting formative research to inform future phases of the campaign.

Phase 1 – Awareness and Education (two months)

The first phase of the campaign focused on educating audiences about the problem, i.e., that nearly half of California's youth are struggling with mental health challenges, and introducing the Certified Wellness Coach profession as part of the solution. This problem/solution framework was executed via radio and social media ads, leveraging the same copy points in both channels for synergy. **Radio** was a critical Phase 1 channel because it reached all three target audiences at the same time, with rotating messages for each. **Paid social** was included for its effectiveness in reaching the target populations and strength in driving awareness and traffic. **Paid search** was added to ensure that people hearing the radio ads could find more information. Finally, to support our quick-to-market approach, we stood up a simple landing page that served as a **subscriber sign-up form** to allow interested people to sign up for more information while the campaign website was in development.

Another critical component of the Phase 1 campaign (and the CWC campaign in general) was **community outreach and engagement**. The Wondros community engagement team worked to engage prospective

partners by connecting the CWC campaign to their missions and giving them easy ways to amplify our message. They identified more than **200** mission-aligned organizations, and began outreach to secure partnerships, providing shareable content in English and Spanish.

While the Phase 1 campaign was in full swing, Wondros and NORC conducted **formative research** to better understand target audience behaviors and how best to reach them. This included a baseline "pulse" survey and in-depth interviews with potential CWC candidates, future employers, mental, emotional, and behavioral (MEB) subject matter experts, school district administrators, CBOs, families who may benefit from CWC services, and other key stakeholders. All research followed standard protocols to maintain respondent privacy. Collectively, the research yielded insights that informed the Phase 2 campaign.

:30 Radio Ad – General Public

Our youth are facing a mental health crisis, but California is building a new workforce of Certified Wellness Coaches to help them get a happier, healthier start in life. Certified Wellness Coaches help children and youth build vital skills to improve their mental health and well-being. A coach can help make a difference for your child and community. Learn more at cawellnesscoach.org. Supported by the California Department of Health Care Access and Information.

Paid Social



Community Engagement



Phase 2 – Awareness and Recruitment (six months)

Phase 2 marked the official launch of the campaign, which was enabled by three key factors: (1) Insights from the formative research, (2) the launch of the **marketing website**, which serves as the campaign hub, and (3) the production of the **Community Narrative Video**, which serves as a foundational creative element and a highly efficient source of synergistic content for multiple channels. With video assets and an informative website featuring content for all audience segments, we were able to add **Over-the-top Television (OTT)**, **Display**, and additional paid social platforms (**Tik-Tok**, **Snapchat**, **LinkedIn**) to the existing media mix. We also launched **Earned media/PR** activities and **organic social** channels on **Facebook**, **Instagram**, and **X** (formerly Twitter).

Wondros continued to capture sign-ups on the marketing website until the certification portal was live. Another methodology employed during this phase was the execution of **hyper-targeted mini campaigns** around key program milestones, such as the launch of student scholarships and Employer Support Grants enabling prospective employers to hire and train Certified Wellness Coaches. These mini campaigns were promoted on the campaign website and supported with tactics such as subscriber email blasts, paid social, **college newspaper ads**, and **stakeholder outreach materials**.

Phase 3 – Awareness, Recruitment, and Activation (in progress)

Phase 3 of the campaign is focused on helping facilitate the hiring of CWCs, while continuing to fill the application pipeline. Support activities include building out the campaign website with more information and resources, including a “Find Your Path” tool to help prospective Coaches and Employers navigate opportunities for the profession, and a News page designed to help optimize for AI search. This phase also includes an increased emphasis on reaching students earlier in their academic journey. Working closely with the Foundation for California Community Colleges (FCCC), Wondros helps activate campus events to raise awareness of the CWC profession among incoming freshmen. New creative elements have also been introduced, including testimonial videos featuring CWCs, employers and youth, based on research findings indicating that they can be powerful voices in motivating prospective applicants to pursue the CWC career path.



Certified
Wellness
Coach

Become a Certified
Wellness Coach

For Wellness Coach
Employers

For Training
Programs

Stay Updated

En Español

SPREAD THE WELLNESS.

Right now, half of California's youth are struggling with their mental health. There's never been a better time to become a California Certified Wellness Coach. A strong, diverse, and healthy workforce means a healthier California.

[Learn More](#)



Why We Need You:

Your Role in Transforming the Behavioral Health Landscape



FPO

What is a Wellness Coach?

There is an urgent need to support the emerging behavioral health needs of California's youth. Certified Wellness Coaches (Coaches) provide care to young people through non-clinical services that support overall physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

[About Becoming a Certified Wellness Coach](#)



How can a Certified Wellness Coach benefit your facility or community?

Today's mental health crisis is negatively impacting youth in California. Certified Wellness Coaches can create real change. Coaches can make a positive difference in schools, health care facilities, and community organizations. They can help young people have better, happier lives.

[For Employers](#)



How to Become an HCAI-Designated Training Program

Becoming an HCAI Designated Training Program opens doors to actively help shape California's behavioral health care available to young people. Training future Certified Wellness Coaches will help to spread wellness for a healthier California.

[Become a Training Program](#)



CREATIVE & MEDIA STRATEGIES



For **Workforce Pathway** candidates, our messaging goal is to encourage them to pursue certification now. It's delivered through motivating copy points like you may already be qualified to become a Certified Wellness Coach, and through media strategies that reach individuals who likely work in fields that qualify as relevant workforce experience, including mental health, substance use/addiction, social work, and/or child welfare.

For **Education Pathway** candidates (recent grads), our messaging goal is to encourage them to pursue a career as a Certified Wellness Coach. It's delivered creatively by describing the profession as "rewarding" and "fulfilling," and an opportunity to help children and youth—all based on insights from our research. It's delivered on media platforms that reach younger audiences and those who are in college or graduated, with interest in subjects that align with the requisite degrees. Community Engagement also plays a significant role in reaching this audience. Via in-person and virtual college career fairs, and informational "Lunch and Learn" sessions and the Handshake career platform, Wondros helps recruit students graduating with eligible degrees from colleges and universities across the state.

For the **general public**, our messaging goals are to build trust in the CWC role and help destigmatize mental illness. They're delivered through creative that communicates the breadth of the problem in California, thus conveying to families and youth that they're not alone. We use testimonials from ethnically and culturally diverse CWCs, many of whom share lived experiences with the populations they serve, thus building trust in the role, while conveying to struggling youth that there's light at the end of the tunnel.

For **employers**, our primary messaging goal is to encourage them to consider hiring a CWC. It's delivered through creative that presents CWCs as a solution to alleviate overburdened behavioral health staff, through media platforms such as LinkedIn, and via community and stakeholder outreach to LEAs, COEs, and CBOs. Wondros also launched a LinkedIn group to help employers post jobs and engage with Certified Wellness Coaches who are seeking employment.

Key Performance Indicators

The CWC campaign generates statewide awareness of the new CWC profession across all target audiences, while simultaneously reaching a narrowly defined audience of candidates who meet the eligibility requirements to become a Certified Wellness Coach, and driving them to the certification portal. Awareness KPIs include **impressions, clicks, click-thru-rate, website visits, and email subscribes**. Certification KPIs include **clicks to "Get Certified" account creations, and certification application completions**.

Since February 2024, **nearly 60,000 individuals** have expressed interest in becoming a Certified Wellness Coach by clicking "Get Certified," representing approximately **one high-intent action for every 42 website visits**.

As of July 2026, the campaign has generated more than **616.4M impressions, 2.5M site visits, and 59.6K conversions, resulting in a 2.4% visit-to-conversion rate** and contributing to the certification of more than **4,800 Wellness Coaches, all while growing the email subscriber base to over 5,000**. CWCs now serve at **745+ sites** with more than **176K students** already receiving support.

Social Media Results



Facebook
36,920,505 Impressions
321K+ engagements
1.2K followers
2.2% post engagement rate
(strong/high-performing)

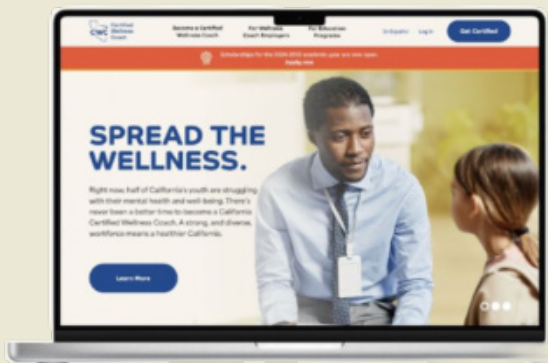


Instagram
24,514,495 views
10.4K engagements
1.8K followers

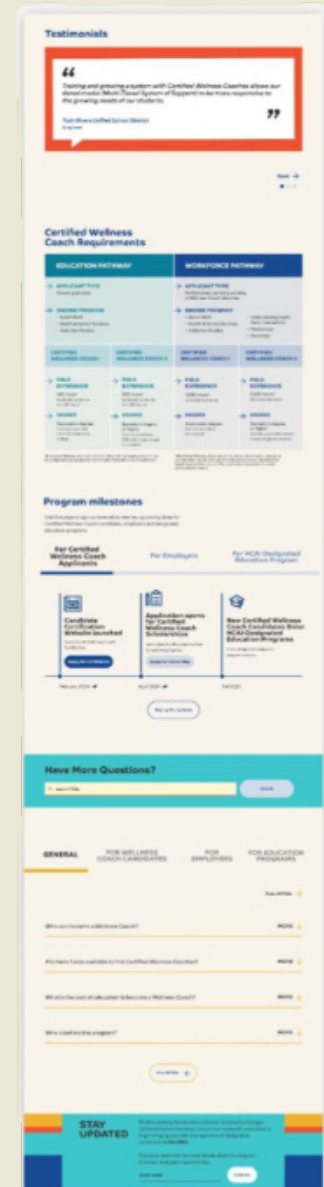
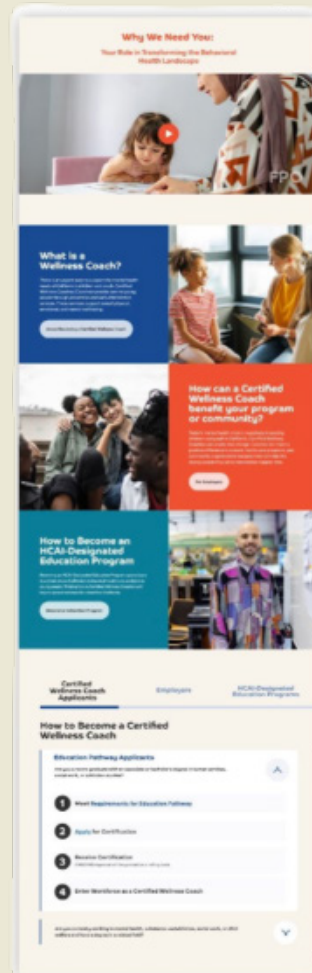
CREATIVE SAMPLES



Website



Original branding and campaign website for the California Department of Health Care Access and Information. Wondros is currently implementing a statewide omnichannel campaign designed to reach diverse audiences about joining the State's mental health workforce in a new role called Certified Wellness Coaches. This effort is part of the State's Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI).



Banner Ads

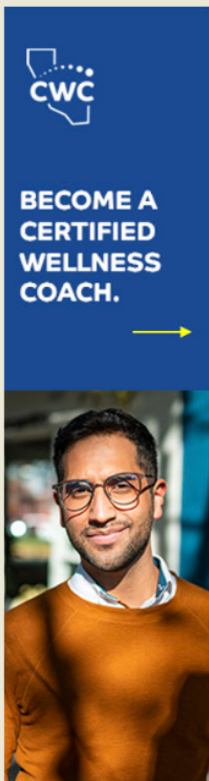


BECOME A CERTIFIED WELLNESS COACH.



With an associate's degree from a California Community College in social work or a related field, you're well on your way.

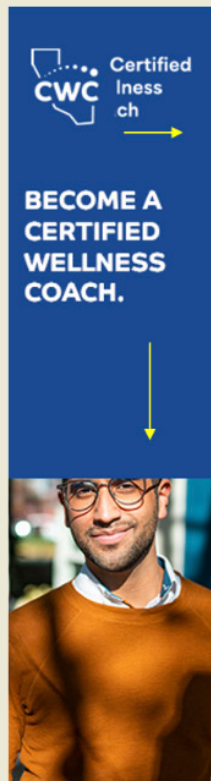
[Learn More](#)



BECOME A CERTIFIED WELLNESS COACH.

Build 1

Copy moves in from the left.

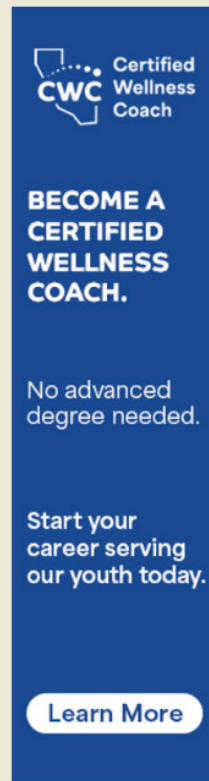


BECOME A CERTIFIED WELLNESS COACH.

Transition

Blue area takes over the banner.

Program name animates next to the insignia.



BECOME A CERTIFIED WELLNESS COACH.

No advanced degree needed.

Start your career serving our youth today.

[Learn More](#)

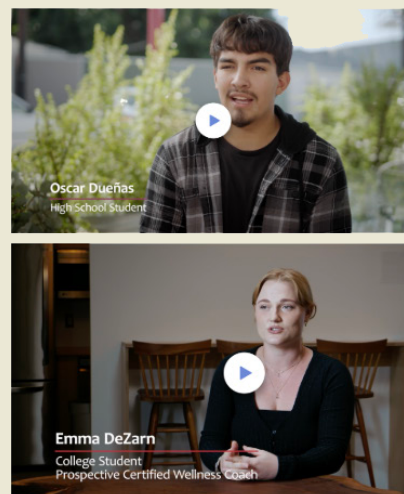
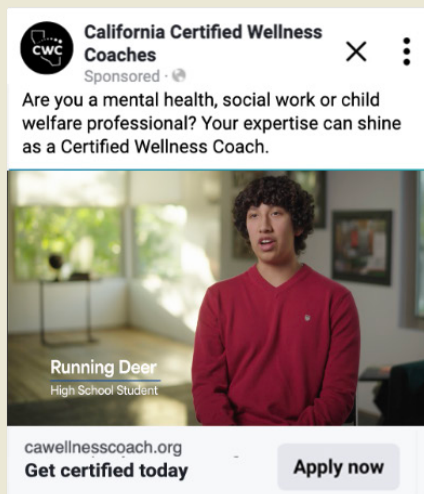
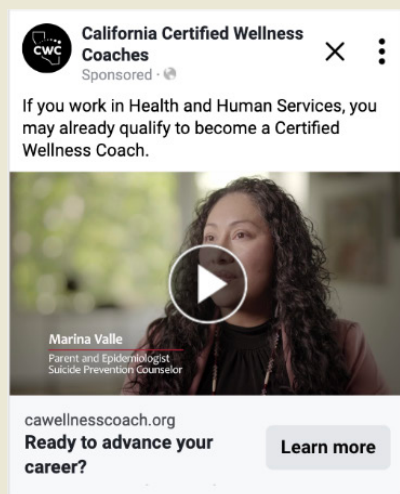
Build 2

After the blue takes over the area, the rest of the copy appears.

Button fades in and the copy appears after.

Build 1	Build 2	Build 3
HAVE A DEGREE IN HUMAN SERVICES? Start a fulfilling career as a Certified Wellness Coach.	CWC Certified Wellness Coach Start a fulfilling career as a Certified Wellness Coach.	CWC Certified Wellness Coach Start a fulfilling career as a Certified Wellness Coach. Learn More

Paid Social and TV



Stills and cut-downs from the Community Narrative Video were an efficient way to make assets for paid social and TV (top row).

The 30-second radio ad (see page 9) reached all audiences and messaging was mirrored in other channels. Smaller animated banners were top performers (center right). All creative reflected diverse audiences and mini campaigns were deployed around key campaign milestones (bottom row).

Branded Merchandise and Palm Cards for Community Engagement



T-shirts and totes have been created for event canvassers (top row), Branded Merchandise for distribution to event attendees include lavender essential oil and Calm Strips (middle row), Community outreach materials are produced in English and Spanish (bottom rows).

Social Media Assets

**California Department of
Health Care Access and I...** ***
3,754 followers

Looking to expand your youth mental health services? California is building a workforce for that. Sign up to learn more.



Be among the first to hire a
Certified Wellness Coach
hcai.ca.gov

Sign up

**California Department of
Health Care Access and I...** ***
3,754 followers

If you have a degree in Social Work or Health & Human Services, you may already qualify to become a Certified Wellness Coach.



California's new certification
program
hcai.ca.gov

Sign up

Sample from community partner toolkit

**PARTNER
TOOLKIT**

This toolkit is designed to help valued partners, like you, spread the word and recruit qualified candidates to become Certified Wellness Coaches.

There is an urgent need to support the mental health needs of California's children and youth. Certified Wellness Coaches will provide care to young people through prevention and early intervention services and support physical and emotional well-being. By reaching children and youth before they are in crisis, Certified Wellness Coaches will increase access to key well-being and support services and allow licensed and credentialed staff to focus on individuals who may have more complex needs or require higher levels of support.

Partnership Opportunities

Please consider the following activities:

- [Share information on social media and tag @CAWellnessCoach](#)
- [Include us in your next newsletter](#)
- [Post Certified Wellness Coach information on your website](#)
- [Share key facts about the mental health of today's youth](#)
- [Help us connect with local media](#)

Social Media

Sharing information on social media and tagging @CAWellnessCoach (or: @cawellnesscoach) will help us increase community awareness and keep your followers updated on this important initiative.

Follow Us: [Facebook](#) [Instagram](#) [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#)

Social Assets

Paid social



Mad Libs-style candidate paid social ad

[Link to post](#)



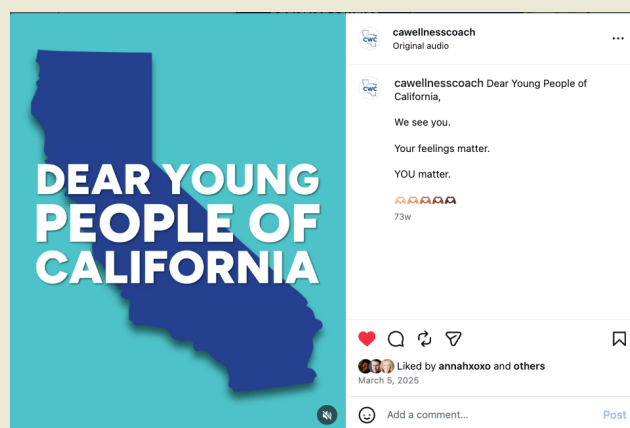
Mad Libs-style employer social ad

[Link to post](#)

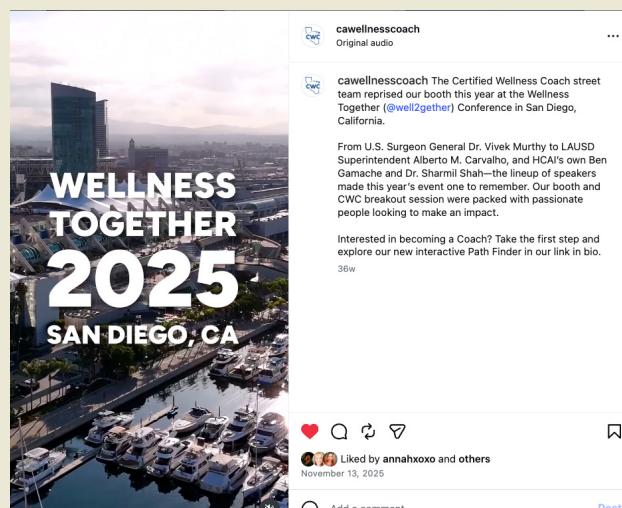
Organic social Instagram posts



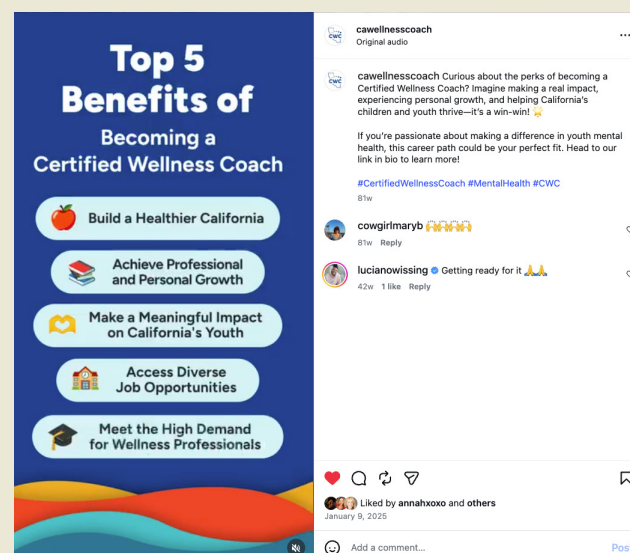
[Link to post](#)



[Link to post](#)

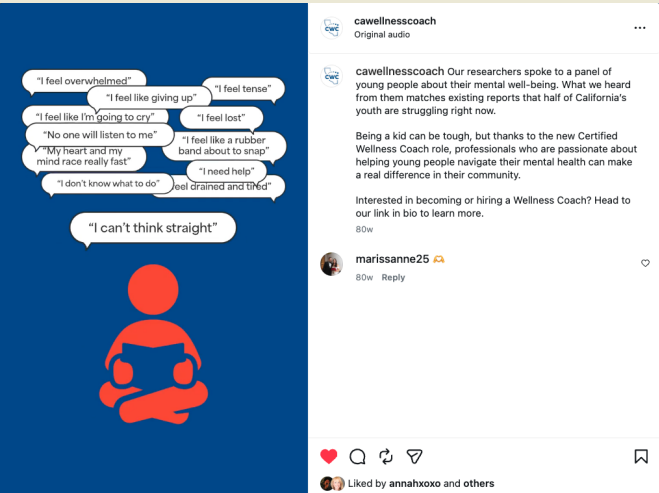


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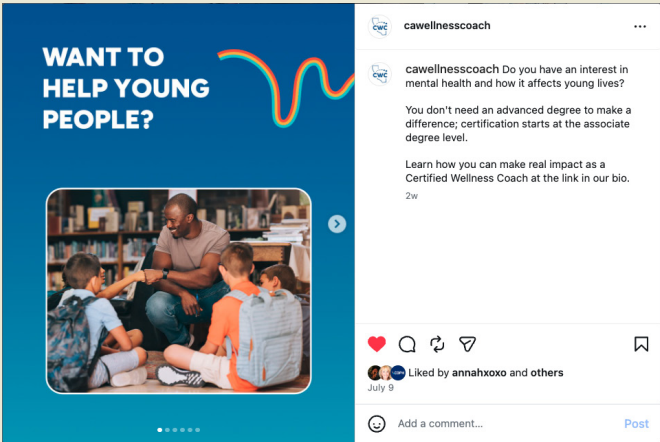


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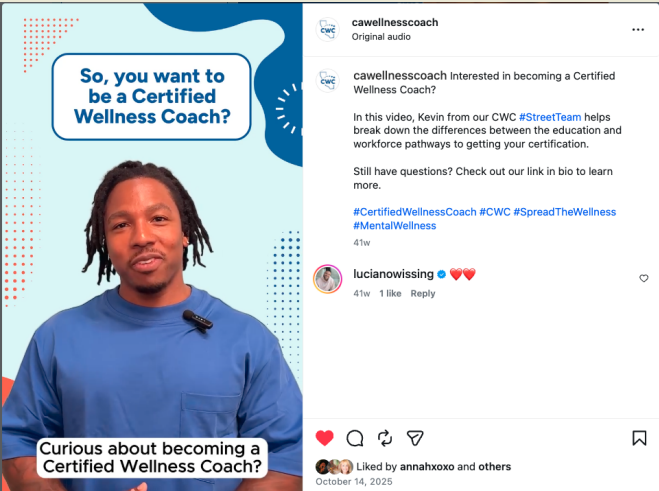
Organic social Instagram posts (continued)



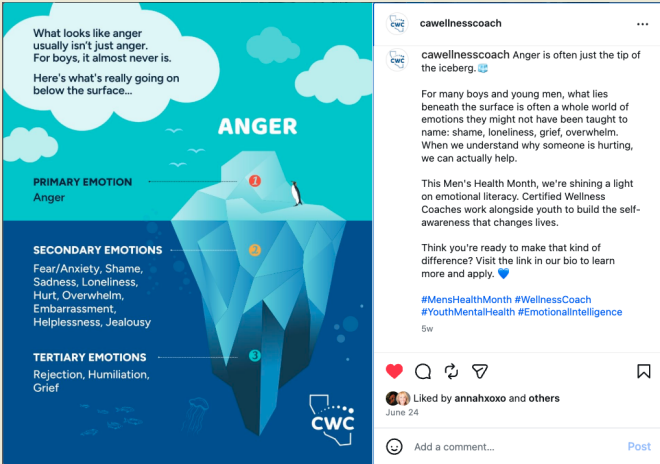
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Founded in 2011 and based in Los Angeles, Wondros is an award-winning creative agency dedicated to driving social impact through bold ideas and purpose-driven campaigns. We combine strategic insight with imaginative storytelling to craft culturally resonant communications that spark movements, shift behaviors, and create lasting change. From public health to global justice, our work helps organizations connect, inspire, and lead with purpose.

wondros.com