August 7, 2025
Behavioral Health Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT IN PERSON
Bill Stewart – District 1
Gaurav Mishra – District 1
Joel San Juan – District 1
Dr. Rosolyn Harper – District 2
Robert Alm – District 2
Julie Hayden – Member-At-Large, District 2
Robin Sales, Chair – District 3
Dr. Devesh Vashishtha – District 3
Stuart Gaiber – District 3
Minola Clark Manson – District 4
Kathy Watkins – District 4
Judith Yates, 2nd Vice Chair – District 4
Donald Romo – District 5
Aaron Byzak – District 5

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT
Janice Luna-Reynoso – District 1
Jessica Kramer – District 3
Terra Lawson-Remer – #21

MEMBER PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE
Amanda Berry, Member-At-Large – District 4

STAFF TO THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD
Nadia Privara Brahms, Acting Director, Behavioral Health Services (BHS)
Dania Barroso-Conde, Program Coordinator, BHS
Maria Molina-Melendez, Behavioral Health Advisory Board Coordinator, BHS

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB) was called to order by Chair Robin Sales at 2:30pm in person and via Zoom.

II. CONSENT CALENDAR

BHAB approved the following consent calendar item:

1. Approval of the Meeting Minutes from the meeting of June 5, 2025
2. Update on Substance Use Disorder Optimal Care Pathways Model, and Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP) Grant Update Board Letter Draft

AYES: 15 NAYS: 0 ABSTENTIONS: 0

DRAFT

III. NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

Total of eight (8) in-person comments and two (2) e-comments

In-Person Comments:

- Steve Dilley, Executive Director of Veterans Art (VetArt) Project, commented on the importance of veterans' advocacy and County-funded arts interventions for veterans and active-duty populations. Veterans Art Project has an explicit inclusion of creative arts as a pilot program for Prevention and Early Invention (PEI)
- Don Bartletti, a veteran with lived experience, expressed how the arts is essential in reducing isolation among veterans. He expressed his support for County investments in VetArt programs.
- Diana Bartletti, the wife of a veteran with lived experience, emphasized the power of creative expression and community support in fostering personal and community connections. She commented that County funding for VetArt would be well allocated.
- Kathleen Derby, a peer support specialist who oversees mental health services in San Diego County, called for innovative, recovery-oriented outpatient care and services as alternatives to hospitalization and conservatorship.
- Peter Westlake discussed data from the Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT) monthly data reports. He encouraged the County to strengthen prevention efforts to help address crises before they escalate.
- Peggy Walker, a public health educator, expressed her concerns about the lack of awareness among the public and elected officials on the high potency of marijuana's harm. She encourages stronger education efforts on its behavioral and physical health impacts.
- Elijah Ferrer, a Marine veteran, shared the importance of programs such as VetArt and the positive impact it had on his transition to civilian life. He encouraged support for veteran advocacy and funding to ensure programs like VetArt can continue to help other veterans.
- Leslie Mukau, a local stakeholder, suggested adopting a low barrier treatment model to prioritize immediate access to evidence-based medication for substance use disorders. He also recommended using substance use navigators or community health workers to help patients with substance use disorders with ongoing care.

E- Comments:

- Anonymous commenter expressed their concerns about programs like Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Act and Assistant Outpatient Treatment (AOT)/Laura's Law, noting limitations in their effectiveness for individuals who may lack insight into their illness or the ability to voluntarily seek help.
- Anonymous commenter, shared concerns with the practice of removing individuals with severe mental illness from County programs when they are unable to voluntarily participate, emphasizing that untreated symptoms may impair their ability to engage and lead to further deterioration.

ACTION ITEM: BHAB 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

On the motion of Minola Clark Manson, seconded by Stuart Gaiber, this item was approved.

AYES: 12 NAYS: 0 ABSTENTIONS: 3

IV. PEER VOICES ROUNDTABLE

Public Comments: Total of two (2) In-Person Public Comments were received.

- Ellen Stone, former co-founder and co-leader of peer-led organization called Impact Young Adult, hosted weekly social events weekly. This organization gave the opportunity to connect and build friendships with people who have similar experiences. She suggested expanding volunteer opportunities as a valuable form of peer support.

- Kathleen Derby expressed concern about the lack of peer involvement in state and County policy discussions. She shared that recent state laws may extend conservatorships rather than reduce long-term hospitalization and urged inclusion of peers in decision-making.

PEER VOICES ROUNDTABLE

Eight (8) peer support specialists were invited to discuss how to elevate the lived experiences of peers to help inform and strengthen San Diego's behavioral health system. Participants shared insights across several focus areas, including the continuum of care, peer and community engagement, workforce barriers, peer roles, and housing. The peer support specialists were asked the following questions:

1) What strengths do peer workers bring to the behavioral health system?
2) What are some of the biggest barriers you've seen to accessing consistent behavioral health care, and how can peer support specialists help individuals navigate or overcome these challenges?
3) In your current role, what opportunities exist for you to provide meaningful feedback and participate in planning efforts within your program?
4) Based on your experience, what are the biggest challenges in finding stable employment as a peer, and what challenges do you think are needed to build a more sustainable and supportive peer workforce?
5) What types of training or support have helped you achieve meaningful involvement in your role, and what additional resources or opportunities would you like to see offered for future peer development?
6) Given the link between housing and behavioral health recovery, what are some of the ways peer workers can support individuals in navigating housing systems?

V. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT OUTS

Robin Sales, Chair, BHAB

- **Pathways to Continuum of Care for Children, Youth, and Adults Impacted by Alcohol and other Drugs Subcommittee**
  - Julie Hayden, Chair, reported that the subcommittee met on July 14. The meeting included discussion on peer respite, personal experiences with addiction, and the development of a crisis navigation handbook to connect individuals with available resources.
- **Re-Entry Support for Justice-Involved Youth and Adults Subcommittee**
  - Robin Sales, Chair, reported that the subcommittee met on July 21 to discuss support for individuals transitioning from incarceration to the community. The meeting focused on the 90-day pre-release program and its role in re-entry planning.

VI. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Nadia Privara, Acting Director, BHS provided the following updates:

- Board of Supervisors, District 3, Chair Terra Lawson-Remer, was appointed to Seat 21 of the BHAB.
- Urmi Patel, PsyD, was appointed as the Public Conservator for the County of San Diego.
- Behavioral Health Bridge Housing (BHBH) and Community Care Expansion-Preservation (CCE-P) grant shave expanded board and care capacity by 221 new slots and help preserve licensed facilities.
- Updates on the Substance Use Disorder Optimal Care Pathways Model, and Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP) Grant will be presented to the Board of Supervisors. BHCIP grant has five County awardees, four of which focus on substance use services.

- El Cajon Police Department (PD) has recently changed their policy when responding to mental health crisis calls. El Cajon PD will not be deployed if someone is not threatening to harm themselves or if there is no immediate risk to others.
- County staff are reviewing implications for individuals experiencing homelessness with mental health and substance use challenges as a result of the Ending Crime and Disorder on America's Streets Executive Order.

VII. CHAIR'S REPORT

Robin Sales, Chair, BHAB provided the following updates:

- The BHAB Retreat held in July provided BHAB members with an opportunity to connect and collaborate on board priorities.
- BHAB will be conducting nominations for the Executive Committee, including Chair, Vice Chairs and two (2) additional members for the upcoming year.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Robin Sales presented a recognition card to Dania Barroso-Conde in appreciation of her years of service and congratulated her on her recent promotion.
- Bill Stewart announced that the CARE Act public comment session will be held via Zoom on August 27, 2025, from 10:00am to 3:00pm. providing the community an opportunity to provide their input.
- Maria Molina-Melendez, BHAB Coordinator, shared that the Office of Economic Development and Government Affairs (EDGA), has opened its public comment period from August 4 through September 5, 2025, with a community forum scheduled for Wednesday, August 27, 2025 to gather feedback on the County's annual legislative program.

IX. MEETING ADJOURNMENT

On the motion of Robin Sales, seconded by Gaurav Mishra and Minola Clark Manson, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00pm.