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TO: Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB)

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BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES (BHS) DIRECTOR'S REPORT – September 2025

BHS HOUSING INITIATIVES UPDATES

BHS continues to play a critical role in advancing housing solutions for individuals experiencing serious mental illness (SMI) and substance use disorders (SUD). In Fiscal Year 2023-24, 11.5% of clients who received mental health services, or 6,811 individuals, experienced homelessness. Similarly, 34.1% of clients receiving SUD services, or 4,873 individuals, reported experiencing homelessness. These data points underscore the intersection between behavioral health and homelessness and the urgency of addressing both simultaneously.

While BHS programs serve a significant proportion of unhoused individuals, regional 2023 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count data reinforce that not all people experiencing homelessness have behavioral health conditions. Of the 10,264 individuals counted, 22% reported living with a serious mental illness and 17% reported living with a substance use disorder. This information was not collected in the 2023 and 2024 PIT Count. These figures illustrate the importance of targeted strategies within the broader homelessness response system and reinforce BHS' commitment to specialized housing and care models that address the needs of individuals with complex behavioral health conditions. BHS provides short-term, transitional, and permanent supportive housing supports.

Permanent Supportive Housing

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is a housing model that combines affordable housing with supportive services. The aim is to assist individuals and families experiencing homelessness in achieving long-term stability and improving their quality of life.

The County has dedicated more than $53 million of Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Community Services and Supports (CSS) funds to the California Housing Finance Agency for the Local Government Special Needs Housing Program (SNHP) and its predecessor, the MHSA Housing Program. These programs have resulted in approximately 350 permanent supportive housing units, of which, 219 units were funded through MHSA and 131 units were funded through SNHP. There are also 57 services-only units where the County does not fund the construction of the unit but does fund supportive services.

In 2018, Proposition 2 authorized the sale of up to $2 billion in revenue bonds and the use of a portion of Proposition 63 taxes for the MHSA No Place Like Home (NPLH) program. This provides funding for permanent supportive housing developments to house clients who are experiencing homelessness and have a mental health condition. The San Diego County allocation was approximately $127.8 million. As of

July 2025, there are 13 developments that are operational or in the lease up phase totaling 346 NPLH units. There are eight new housing developments planned, adding 98 units and bringing the total number of NPLH units to 444.

Permanent Supportive Housing: Homekey
Through partnership with the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC), BHS provides supportive services at Homekey-funded PSH developments for individuals experiencing homelessness and living with disabling behavioral or physical health conditions. Residents are matched through the Coordinated Entry System and receive voluntary supportive services including outreach, behavioral health assessment, light and clinical case management, crisis intervention, housing stabilization, and care coordination with behavioral health and social services.

The first round of Homekey developments includes Kearny Vista (142 units), and Valley Vista (190 units), both of which are currently operational. Round 3 Homekey projects include Abbott Street Apartments "The Shores" (13 units), which opened in November 2024; Presidio Palms (161 units), which began lease-up in May 2025; and Pacific Village (62 units), expected to open in late summer 2025. Once fully operational, all five developments will provide a combined total of 568 permanent supportive housing units. These investments with integrated care models are designed to promote long-term housing stability and recovery.

Across these initiatives BHS supports 1,321 permanent supportive housing units across 43 developments.

Supportive Services: Tenant Peer Support Services
To provide support for individuals residing in PSH units, BHS funds the Tenant Peer Support Services (TPSS) program. TPSS provides housing support and navigation services for individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, particularly those with behavioral health conditions who are connected to or will be connected to permanent supportive housing resources. Services include housing navigation and peer support services to assist clients in identifying, securing, and maintaining safe and affordable housing. The program also supports the County's commitment in providing access to necessary behavioral health supportive services for no less than 20 years, which is a requirement to receive NPLH funds. These services are provided countywide.

If a higher level of support is needed, the tenant may be referred to a higher level of care, such as outpatient clinic services, Strengths-Based Case Management (SBCM), or Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), to receive intensive, field-based case management and stabilization supports.

Housing Supports
Full-Service Partnerships (FSP) is a comprehensive and intensive mental health program for adults with severe and persistent mental illness. Examples of FSPs in San Diego County are SBCM and ACT. FSPs utilize a "whatever it takes" field-based approach using innovative interventions to help people reach recovery goals. If an individual is experiencing homelessness, FSP programs will support with linking the client to housing, which might include their own apartment or an independent living home. Independent livings are privately-owned or operated homes or complexes that provide shared housing for adults with disabilities, including mental illness, and others who may benefit from a shared living environment.

BHS funds recovery residence stays for individuals connected to BHS-funded outpatient treatment service providers. Recovery residences are privately owned homes or complexes that provide housing for adults with a substance use disorder or co-occurring disorder. To promote quality of independent living homes and recovery residences, BHS funds the Independent Living Association (ILA) and Recovery Residence Association (RRA). The ILA and RRA are voluntary membership organizations for independent living home and recovery residence operators. The ILA and RRA provide education, monitor quality standards for member operators, and maintain a directory.

Behavioral Health Bridge Housing
To address the critical shortage of licensed residential care settings for individuals with serious behavioral health conditions, BHS has leveraged Behavioral Health Bridge Housing Round 1 grant funds to expand Augmented Services Program (ASP) capacity across the County. Since March 2024, 221 new board and

care slots have been added, an 87% increase over baseline capacity. The ASP is intended to provide additional services countywide to eligible individuals who are 18 years and older with serious and prolonged mental illness in board and cares. All clients receiving ASP services are enrolled in SBCM or ACT and are the only ASP referral sources. ASP services might include transportation, shopping, cooking, money management, etc. These new slots were secured through a combination of contract amendments and competitive procurements. Additional solicitations are underway to achieve the full goal of 450 new slots, as identified in the Optimal Care Pathways model.

Community Care Expansion Preservation
In tandem with expanding capacity, BHS has focused on preserving existing board and care resources through the Community Care Expansion Preservation (CCE-P) grant. Under the CCE-P grant, only Adult Residential Facilities and Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly are eligible for funding, as defined by the California Community Care Licensing Division. As of June 2025, CCE-P funding has helped preserve 421 beds across nine facilities by supporting critical capital project upgrades and operating subsidy payments. Capital Project funds, totaling approximately $5 million, have enabled essential improvements such as heating, ventilation, and air conditioning installations, roof replacements, and Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant modifications. Operating Subsidy Payments of approximately $7 million across eight facilities will offset day-to-day expenses, including staffing, utilities, and maintenance, helping stabilize operations and prevent closures.

These investments have been essential in maintaining residential care options for individuals who are applicants or recipients of SSI/SSP/CAPI, have a serious behavioral health condition, and are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. BHS continues to explore and strengthen partnerships with local community-based organizations, including small-scale, independently owned and operated board and care providers, to enhance regional capacity and increase licensed board and care capacity.

Large Policy Changes: BHSA, BH-CONNECT, and Medi-Cal Transformation
BHS is actively preparing for the upcoming implementation of the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA), which was approved by California voters in March 2024 through Proposition 1. This new framework significantly reshapes the MHSA, including the creation of a dedicated housing category that will direct 30% of BHSA funding to housing-related supports. BHS has already laid foundational infrastructure using MHSA funds and will continue to enhance systems and partnerships to effectively administer BHSA housing dollars. Importantly, these changes also expand the scope of planning and reporting to include substance use disorder services, aligning with BHS's integrated approach to behavioral health and housing.

Concurrently, BHS is engaging in statewide efforts to implement BH-CONNECT, a Medi-Cal demonstration project designed to address the needs of individuals with behavioral health conditions who are at risk of homelessness or institutionalization. A key feature of BH-CONNECT is the Transitional Rent (TR) Medi-Cal Community Benefit, which will provide up to six months of temporary rental assistance for eligible Medi-Cal members. The TR benefit will become available to the Behavioral Health Population of Focus on January 1, 2026. This benefit must be accessed before BHSA housing resources can be utilized, requiring strategic alignment between MCPs, BHS, and housing providers. To support this coordination, the County is exploring the development of a regional Flexible Housing Pool model, which would allow public and private funds to be combined to increase access to interim and permanent housing. These large-scale policy shifts offer a critical opportunity to expand housing access, improve care continuity, and promote long-term recovery for individuals with complex behavioral health needs.

BHS SPECIAL EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

16th Annual Early Childhood Mental Health Conference – "We Can't Wait!"
BHS, in partnership with Early Childhood stakeholders, will host the 16th Annual Early Childhood Mental Health Conference – "We Can't Wait!" on September 18-19, 2025. This year's conference, centered on "The Power of Presence: Building a Supportive Environment," will bring together a dynamic blend of nationally and locally recognized experts. These leaders in mental health, education, and social services will explore critical strategies for engaging young children and their families—both in direct clinical work and through broader systemic efforts. The conference will take place in a hybrid format, with the in-person

convening being held at the Crowne Plaza San Diego in Mission Valley. Event information and registration is available at the following link: https://ecmh.ce-go.com/ecmh2025/home#

Update on Expanding Recuperative Care Program Contracts
On July 1, 2025, BHS executed two new contracts, fully funded by Behavioral Health Bridge Housing (BHBH) round 3 grant funds, creating a total of 33 recuperative care beds for unfunded/uninsured clients experiencing homelessness. These slots are anticipated to be available by September 2025 and will provide medical respite care for clients with complex medical needs who need a safe environment to progress in their recovery from acute care settings. Services will include medical monitoring, as well as housing and benefits coordination in an effort to help eligible clients establish Medi-Cal, which can then seamlessly take over the funding of these services. These recuperative care programs are the first of their kind in the County behavioral health system of care and benefit those who would be at risk of returning to homelessness without this added layer of support.

Respectfully submitted,



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