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September 23, 2025

TO: Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB)

FROM: Nadia Privara Brahms, MPA, Acting Director, Behavioral Health Services

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

BHS JUSTICE-INVOLVED AND RE-ENTRY PROGRAM UPDATES

As a health plan, public health entity, contractor and provider of direct services, BHS provides services that support the behavioral health needs of individuals with justice involvement. Key BHS services focused on preventing and supporting clients with justice involvement include outpatient mental health and substance use programs, residential substance use treatment programs, Mobile Crisis Response Services, Crisis Stabilization Units, Sobering Services, Collaborative Court Services, and evidence-based intensive community-based outpatient treatment service models including Assertive Community Treatment.

TURN to Recovery

The TURN to Recovery program, formerly the Serial Inebriate Program, is a collaboration between BHS, San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) and law enforcement to provide substance use treatment services for individuals with a primary Alcohol Use Disorder who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. In addition to outpatient substance use treatment services, the program provides care coordination and short-term transitional housing, if eligible. During Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-25, the program served 137 clients.

Collaborative Courts: Drug Court

Drug Court programs provide substance use disorder treatment services as part of the County's Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System to participants in each of the four regional Drug Courts (North, East, South, and Central). BHS Drug Court services are provided in collaboration with justice partners, including the City Attorney, Court, District Attorney, Probation, Public Defender, and Sheriff. Services are provided for adults who have committed a non-violent, drug-related crime, and have a primary substance use disorder. Services support sobriety, housing, employment, education, and family re-unification with the goal of addressing substance use treatment needs, diverting from incarceration, and preventing future arrests. Criminal charges may be reduced or dismissed upon successful completion of the program. During FY 2024-25, 528 clients were served in the Drug Court programs, an increase of 132 clients from the previous year. This data includes linkages to services by the Drug Court treatment teams.

Collaborative Courts: Reentry Court
The Reentry Court program is a collaborative effort between BHS and justice system partners to engage individuals who have violated their probation, community supervision and have been assessed as having a primary substance use disorder and may also have co-occurring mental health conditions. The program's services support the individual's sobriety, housing, employment, education, and family reunification. Successful program completion may result in early termination from probation. During FY 2024-25, 51 clients were served in Reentry Court.

Behavioral Health Services for Clients in Custody: Project In-Reach and Project In-Reach Ministry
Through Project In-Reach, BHS collaborates with the Sheriff's Office to engage individuals in custody who have been diagnosed with serious mental illness and/or co-occurring conditions, in treatment. This program receives referrals by the Sheriff's Office and provides services to clients 90 days prior to their release into the community to allow for sufficient time to build rapport. The program provides ongoing support to clients for up to 120 days to help them successfully transition from custody to community. In FY 2024-25, 157 clients were enrolled. Project In-Reach is a provider supporting the Medi-Cal Transformation and the Justice-Involved Initiative Behavioral Health Links for the adult population.

The Project In-Reach Ministry functions similarly to Project In-Reach. If requested by the client, this program supports an individual's spiritual needs and provides linkage to religious organizations within the community based on the client's choice. In FY 2024-25, there were 182 clients enrolled. Project In-Reach Ministry is a provider supporting the Medi-Cal Transformation and the Justice-Involved Initiative Behavioral Health Links for the adult population.

Justice Involved Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Programs
The Center Star ACT program utilizes the ACT model of care to provide comprehensive, multi-disciplinary, field-based mental health services for justice-involved clients who are diagnosed with serious mental illness and co- occurring disorders who are experiencing homelessness. The Center Star ACT program supports the client in stepping down to a lower level of care within the program utilizing a strength-based case management approach and offers both transitional and long-term housing resources. During FY 2024-25, 265 unduplicated clients were served at Center Star ACT.

The Vida ACT program serves clients that have been diagnosed with a serious mental illness and may have co-occurring conditions, who are experiencing homelessness and are re-entering the community from custody. The program specializes in assessing criminogenic needs to ensure they are addressed in the treatment plan. During FY 2024-25, 125 unduplicated clients were provided with the ACT program at Vida.

The Telecare Behavioral Health Court (BHC) ACT program works in partnership with the Behavioral Health Court and provides individuals who are diagnosed with serious mental illness who have engaged in criminal behavior. BHC provides intensive mental health treatment with concurrent emphasis on sobriety, stable housing, linkage to benefits and employment, re-unification with family, and employment or education support. Successful completion of the program may result in the reduction or dismissal of charges. During FY 2024-25, 84 clients were provided with BHC services. In 2025, Telecare BHC received Proposition 47 funding to support the program's transition from an ACT to a Forensic ACT program. This funding also provided the ability to add drug testing capabilities, increased housing funds, and a peer support specialist with justice involved experience.

Deferred Entry of Judgement (DEOJ) Program: Treatment-Mandated Felony Act
In December 2024, California voters passed Proposition 36, Treatment-Mandated Felony Act (Health and Safety Code 11395), for immediate implementation. Proposition 36, an unfunded mandate, required the County to develop systems, processes, and infrastructure to meet mandated requirements, including but not limited to, increased access and linkages to behavioral health supports, such as substance use and mental health treatment as well as navigating the court minute orders to initiate the behavioral health referral and treatment workflow. San Diego County Courts opted for treatment to be a minimum of 6 months, and no

more than 18 months, with the level of care and treatment providers being a combination based on clinical need, and inclusive of self-help services.

On April 7, 2025, four courthouses (Central, East, South and North) went live with referrals to BHS for substance use and mental evaluations to determine the appropriate level of care for clients (i.e. outpatient, medication assisted treatment, residential services, etc.). The current workflow has leveraged a partnership between the Court and BHS to share minute orders and addendums requesting an evaluation be completed and a recommended level of care be shared with the Court. The Court approves the treatment recommendation and orders the client to follow up with the recommendation and return to Court at a future date with progress updates. The Court reminds the client that it is their responsibility to start treatment and obtain the progress updates for the court.

From inception to September 12, 2025, BHS has received 368 addendums from the four courts and has completed 321 evaluations to date. Of the level of care recommendations, 77% were for outpatient treatment, 2% for intensive outpatient program (IOP) treatment, 8% for narcotic treatment program (NTP), and 13% for residential treatment. At the time evaluations were completed, 55% of clients were out of custody and 45% were in custody.

Next Move

BHS developed the County-operated Next Move program in response to the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) Justice-Involved Initiative under the Behavioral Health (BH) Links requirement, which directed counties to provide Medi-Cal behavioral health services for youth leaving detention. Planning began in November 2023, following more than 15 years of the BHS Juvenile Forensic Services STAT Team providing in-custody behavioral health care in the County's juvenile detention facilities. Next Move launched in October 2024, with the STAT team briefly delivering services both in detention and in the community before fully transitioning out of the institutions in December 2024. The program achieved Medi-Cal certification in January 2025. Since its launch, Next Move has served 281 youth, with 163 currently active in care. Services are offered countywide, with two main clinic sites at the Southeastern Live Well Center and the North Coastal Live Well Health Center. Services may be delivered in-person at the clinic sites, within the community, or through telehealth.

Next Move provides a full continuum of behavioral health services including individual, family, and group therapy, psychiatric assessment and medication management, case management and care coordination, and mental competency restoration for court-ordered youth. The program also incorporates trauma-informed and evidence-based practices such as Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) group curriculum, MyLife MyChoice, and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy, with Functional Family Therapy (FFT) in development. In July and August 2025, Next Move hosted open houses at both clinic sites with a combined attendance of about 100 participants, highlighting services and strengthening partnerships. By offering a strong continuum of treatment and family-focused supports, the program is building a foundation for long-term stability, reduced recidivism, and improved outcomes for youth and their families.

MOBILE CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM (MCRT) UPDATE

MCRT School Pilot Program

In collaboration with the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) and participating school districts, BHS launched the MCRT for schools beginning with Fallbrook Union Elementary School District on September 30, 2024. This rollout expanded to include all public TK-12 school districts and charter schools across the county by November 2024. MCRT provides a trauma-informed, compassionate alternative to traditional emergency responses for behavioral health crises in schools.

Since the countywide school rollout in November 2024, MCRT has responded to over 200 school-based referrals. Of these, approximately 70% were resolved on-site without the need for student transport to

additional care. Demographic trends show that 63% of calls involved female students, with the largest ethnic group served being Hispanic (33%), and the most common age group served being youth ages 11–12. To support quick response times, schools were provided direct access lines to MCRT, bypassing the standard Access and Crisis Line (ACL) screening process. In accordance with the behavioral health crisis response protocol, schools are instructed to call 911 or the Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT) in situations where the safety criteria are not met for MCRT response. To further support school staff, MCRT is developing a training video that explains its role and response process - modeled after the successful videos used during MCRT's rollout to law enforcement.

Feedback from school partners has been overwhelmingly positive, with many reporting that MCRT has become a highly valued and effective resource in responding to student behavioral health crises. School staff have expressed appreciation for MCRT's timely response, professionalism, and the support it provides to both students and school personnel during difficult situations. The BHS leadership team continues to work closely with SDCOE to provide ongoing education and support to school districts, to support sustained integration and effectiveness of MCRT in addressing behavioral health crises within the school setting.

BHS TRANSFORMATION UPDATE

On August 26, 2025, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors approved the creation of an Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Social Safety Net and Behavioral Health Systems Transformation (Subcommittee). This Subcommittee will guide the Board on how to transform BHS into a separate, standalone organizational structure via a multi-year transformation effort at the earliest date possible. To view the Board Letter document, please visit the following link: file.sandiegocounty.gov/COB/COBPublicView?FileId=40785334.

Why the Transformation is Urgent

The Board directed County leadership to advise the Board on "a plan for BHS to function as a managed Medi-Cal specialty behavioral health plan" and position the department to meet shifting federal and state requirements. Two major policy shifts are driving this urgency:

- At the state level, California's Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) takes effect July 1, 2026, following the passage of Proposition 1 in 2024.
- At the federal level, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, passed in July 2025, is reshaping Medicaid (and in California, Medi-Cal).

What this Means in Practice

The Subcommittee will advise the County's Chief Administrative Officer on structural and operational changes needed to transform BHS into a distinct organization that functions as a specialty behavioral health plan. Health plans typically rely on a set of core systems and functions to operate effectively, meet regulatory requirements, and deliver services to members. Some common systems and functions of health plans include utilization management, provider network management, member services, product design, and claims adjudication. In conducting its work, the Subcommittee may explore these and other health plan systems and functions, and is anticipated to consider a range of focus areas to address the operational and equity implications of recent federal policy changes, including but not limited to: potential public benefits impacts; workforce and administrative readiness; outreach, education, and communication; cross-sector partnerships; technology and data solutions; and engagement with state and federal agencies. The Subcommittee is anticipated to convene before the end of the calendar year to initiate discussions.

BHS SPECIAL EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Peer Support in Action Educational Summit and Resource Fair – October 28, 2025

The "Peer Support in Action" Educational Summit and Resource Fair will be held on October 28, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the North Inland Live Well Center in Escondido. This free event will highlight community members who have transformed their lived experience into careers supporting others. The target

audience includes individuals with current or past justice-involvement interested in learning about jobs and careers in the health and social services fields, and educational resources to support their goals.

The summit will feature presentations from San Diego Workforce Partnership on peer support job opportunities in the San Diego market and panel discussions with experienced peers working in healthcare, treatment programs, and reentry services. There will also be presentations from North County colleges supporting justice-involved individuals through a variety of pathways and programs. A resource fair will give attendees the opportunity to network and connect with community resource organizations at their own pace. To eliminate participation barriers, the event provides support including free lunch, onsite parking, transit passes, and grocery bags for attendees provided by Feeding San Diego.

For event information and registration, please visit the following link:
forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=E69jRSnAs0G3TJZejuyPljrAYs_oSh1NpB0SGcKkf-BUMlBQWVYwTVdYSVUzQVJLQTY3MTVSWkZSTyQlQCN0PWcu&route=shorturl

Check Your Mood
BHS invites you to participate in Check Your Mood! In anticipation of mental health topics highlighted in October, including National Depression Screening Day, Mental Illness Awareness Week, and ongoing year-round efforts, this campaign raises awareness of mental health, reduces stigma around screenings, empowers individuals to seek support, and recognizes the widespread impact of depression.

Join other community members throughout San Diego County to access mental health resources, complete the online Check Your Mood screening, and take part in the social media campaign to promote mental health awareness!

For more information on Check Your Mood, please visit the Live Well San Diego Check Your Mood Webpage at the following link: livewellsd.org/events/check-your-mood.

2025 Live Well Advance & School Summit – October 22, 2025
BHS invites you to participate in the 10th Annual Live Well Advance Conference and School Summit on Wednesday, October 22nd, 2025, at the San Diego Convention Center. The Live Well Advance Conference & School Summit brings thousands of partners and stakeholders together to network, learn about new tools and best practices, and participate in breakout sessions. Leaders from every sector come together to participate in efforts to advance our shared vision of a healthy, safe, and thriving San Diego region.

During the conference, BHS will host a breakout session to discuss the transition from the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) to the newly approved Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA), launching on July 1st, 2026. Together, we'll explore how BHS can respond locally to this statewide transformation and discuss opportunities to better support community behavioral health needs.

Your voice matters - help shape the future of behavioral health in our region! For more information on this free conference, registration information, keynote speaker, and brief breakout session descriptions, please visit the following link: https://www.livewellsd.org/events/live-well-advance.

Fall National Prescription Drug Takeback Day – October 25, 2025
The United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) will be hosting National Prescription Drug Takeback Day on October 25, 2025. The National Prescription Drug Take Back Day aims to provide a safe, convenient, and responsible means of disposing of prescription drugs, while also educating the general public about the potential for abuse of medications. DEA will be hosting and participating in Take Back events throughout the country. The public is encouraged to turn in unneeded medication for safe disposal. For more information on National Takeback Day and to locate a collection site near you, visit: dea.gov/takebackday.

DEA Authorized Collectors also provide year- round drop off locations to the public to dispose of unwanted pharmaceuticals. To locate Year-Round Pharmaceutical Disposal Locations visit: apps.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch/spring/main?execution=e1s1.

Medi-Cal Community Information Sessions
BHS community engagement staff will join HHSA Medical Care Services as they host a series of community information sessions throughout the County about Medi-Cal resources to share information about department resources and solicit input on behavioral health needs and priorities as part of BHSA Community Planning Process activities. The sessions will include information about non-specialty and specialty Behavioral Health Services, Enhanced Care Management, and other Community Supports (e.g. housing assistance).

Community information sessions are scheduled at the following dates, times, and locations. For more information about these efforts, please visit ymcasd.org/medi-cal and/or contact the San Diego Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (SDAIM) Team at SDAIM.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov.

- **Copley-Price Family YMCA** – Saturday, October 11, 2025, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
- **Escondido Center for Community Well-Being** – Saturday, October 25, 2025, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
- **Ronald Reagan Community Center** – Saturday, November 8, 2025, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
- **Mira Mesa Senior Center** – Saturday, November 22, 2025, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
- **Virtual Session for Community Members** – Tuesday, December 9, 2025, 6:00 p.m.–7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nadia Privara
Digitally signed by Nadia Privara
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