September 4, 2025
Behavioral Health Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT IN PERSON
Dr. Rosolyn Harper – District 2
Robert Alm – District 2
Julie Hayden – Member-At-Large, District 2
Robin Sales, Chair – District 3
Stuart Gaiber – District 3
Minola Clark Manson – District 4
Kathy Watkins – District 4
Judith Yates, 2nd Vice Chair – District 4
Amanda Berry, Member-At-Large – District 4
John Byrom – District 5
Donald Romo – District 5
Supervisor Lawson-Remer – #21

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT IN PERSON
Janice Luna-Reynoso – District 1
Bill Stewart – District 1
Jessica Kramer – District 3
Dr. Devesh Vashishtha – District 3
Aaron Byzak – District 5

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE
Joel San Juan – District 1
Gaurav Mishra – District 1

STAFF TO THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD
Nadia Privara Brahms, Acting Director, Behavioral Health Services (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 2:30 pm in person and via Zoom. Chair Robin Sales introduced two (2) new BHAB members: Supervisor Lawson-Remer and John Byrom.

II. CONSENT CALENDAR

BHAB approved the following consent calendar item with an amendment to include a summary of the Peer Voices Roundtable, capturing key learnings and feedback gathered:

1. Approval of the Meeting Minutes from the meeting of August 7, 2025

AYES: 14 NAYS: 0 ABSTENTIONS: 0

III. NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

Total of five (5) in-person comments and six (6) e-comments.

In-Person Comments:

DRAFT

- Jerry Hall expressed concern about the County's preparedness to address behavioral health needs and emphasized the importance of ensuring access to mental health care and medications, particularly for communities of color who may feel targeted and underserved.
- Dean Seadoto, a community member in recovery and a stakeholder at addiction treatment centers, shared his efforts to open a primary outpatient program in San Diego.
- K. Marie, a family member of an individual with serious mental illness, described barriers to treatment due to lack of insight and delays in care. She highlighted that voluntary-based treatment leaves individuals at risk of severe deterioration and called for earlier intervention.
- Reginal Green, representing the Veterans Art Project, shared his lived experience with the program and described the role of creative arts in healing for veterans and first responders. He emphasized the value of continuing County support for arts-based recovery.
- Paul Dunlap, CEO of *For Better Brains*, highlighted the nonprofit's work addressing gaps for individuals with severe mental illness, such as providing basic resources and transportation. He also described a recent suicide prevention event and encouraged ongoing efforts to support prevention and recovery.

E- Comments:

- Mary Jo O'Brien thanked the Board for hosting the Peer Voices Roundtable and asked how feedback from peers would be implemented. She also announced an open Peer Council seat for the substance use community and emphasized the importance of peer voices.
- Becky Rath suggested the Board communicate risks of marijuana business expansion to the Board of Supervisors. She cited research linking high-potency cannabis to psychosis, anxiety, and suicide risk, and expressed concern about impacts on youth, rural communities, and vulnerable populations.
- Megan Stuart welcomed new board member John Byrom, highlighting his leadership and community commitment. She emphasized that substance use prevention is central to behavioral health promotion, highlighting the long-term benefits of prevention investments.
- John Brady, with Lived Experience Advisors, raised concerns about mold in affordable and supportive housing. He mentioned that local physicians cannot diagnose mold-related illness, limit available data and potentially impacting low-income residents disproportionately.
- Sandra Robinson opposed reliance on jails for people with serious mental illness and advocated for expanded long-term hospital beds, conservatorships, and improved board-and-care facilities with adequate resources and supervision.
- June Dudas expressed support of County efforts on involuntary behavioral health treatment and encouraged adoption of psychiatric advance directives. She raised concerns about the implementation of the Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Act program when individuals decline voluntary participation.

IV. ACTION ITEM: CHAIR APPOINTMENTS TO THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE FOR 2026

On the motion of Amanda Berry, seconded by Joel San Juan, this item was approved.

AYES: 14 NAYS: 0 ABSTENTIONS: 0

V. DISCUSSION ITEM: PEER VOICES ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

Robin Sales, Chair, facilitated a follow-up discussion on the Peer Voices Roundtable held during last month's BHAB meeting. Members reviewed peer feedback highlighting key opportunities, challenges, and recommendations for strengthening behavioral health services and the peer workforce. The Board proposed continuing this discussion during the upcoming Fall Retreat.

VI. ACTION ITEM: BHS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT APPROACHES AND ACTIVITIES TO INFORM 2026-2029 BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT (BHSA) INTEGRATED PLAN DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Public Comments:

- Jerry Hall expressed concern that the current vote reflects general approaches for community engagement rather than a concrete plan. He suggested the formation of a dedicated Community Planning Team, noting other counties have already implemented such structures.
- Mary Jo O'Brien emphasized the need to elevate peer and client voices in the planning process. She requested clarification on how input from the Peer Council and community sessions is being reported. She also recommended the County to conduct more direct outreach in hospitals and clubhouses to ensure client voices are represented.

ACTION ITEM: BHS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT APPROACHES AND ACTIVITIES TO INFORM 2026-2029 BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT (BHSA) INTEGRATED PLAN DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Kat Briggs, MPH, Chief, Communication & Engagement Operations, BHS, presented updates on the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) seeking BHAB approval of the proposed community engagement approaches and activities to inform the development of the 2026–2029 Integrated Plan. Key efforts include integrating BHSA discussions into existing community forums, piloting new engagement strategies, and launching new online engagement platforms.

Amanda Berry, motioned to keep the action items as is with the addition of the establishment of a BHAB Community Planning Process (CPP) Ad-Hoc Subcommittee to beginning October 2025 with a sunsetting date of October 2026. The goal of the ad hoc CPP Subcommittee will be to provide the department with BHAB input on the BHSA Integrated Plan development and the Community Planning Process.
This motion was seconded by Dr. Julie Hayden.

AYES: 13 NAYS: 0 ABSTENTIONS: 0

VII. TIJUANA RIVER VALLEY SEWAGE EMERGENCY: ASSESSMENT OF CHEMICAL EXPOSURE (ACE) RESULTS UPDATE

Dr. Sayone Thihalolipavan, MD, MPH, Public Health Officer, Public Health Services, and Yael Koenig, LCSW, Deputy Director, Programs & Services, BHS, provided an update on the public health impacts of the Tijuana River Valley sewage crisis:

- Reviewed collaborative efforts with BHS, community-based organizations, and regional Community Leadership Teams, including distribution of resource tip cards, promotion of 988 Lifeline and behavioral health resources, and provision of air purifiers for eligible households.

VIII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- On August 26, 2025, the Board of Supervisors approved the establishment of an Ad Hoc Subcommittee to guide the transition of BHS into a stand-alone department.
- Home Key projects continue to increase housing capacity and partnerships with local developers and cities.
- Behavioral Health Bridge Housing and licensed board and care programs continue to provide support and long-term care options for individuals with serious behavioral health needs.
- Community Care Expansion Preservation (CCE-P) grant helps to preserve existing Adult Residential Facilities and Residential Care Facilities for the elderly, expanding regional board and care capacity.

- Planning is underway for the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) housing interventions, effective July 1, 2026.
- BHS is participating in statewide efforts to implement Behavioral Health Community-Based Organized Networks of Equitable Care and Treatment (BH-CONNECT), a Medi-Cal demonstration project to support individuals at risk of homelessness or institutionalization.
- 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, focusing on "The Power of Presence: Building a Supportive Environment."

IX. CHAIR'S REPORT

Robin Sales, Chair, BHAB provided the following updates:

- The Executive Committee appointed Janice Luna Reynoso to serve as 1st Vice Chair for the remainder of the calendar year.
- An invitation was extended for BHAB members to participate in a site visit at the Escondido Clubhouse.
- Called for volunteers to form a Fall Retreat Planning Committee.
- The hiring process for a new BHS Director is currently on hold.
- Minola Clark Manson reported that the Re-Entry Support for Justice-Involved Youth and Adults Subcommittee met on August 25 to review re-entry supports and service gaps, and develop formal questions for providers, the County, and safety groups.
- Dr. Julie Hayden reported that the Pathways to Continuum of Care for Children, Youth, and Adults Impacted by Alcohol and other Drugs Subcommittee met on August 11th. The meeting included a discussion on detox programs and services available. She also announced that the September subcommittee meeting is canceled, and the next meeting is scheduled for October.
- The BHAB Data Notebook will be presented for approval in October.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements were made.

XI. MEETING ADJOURNMENT

On motion of Judith Yates, seconded by Kathy Watkins, the BHAB meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm.