February 5, 2026
Behavioral Health Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT IN PERSON
William "Bill" Stewart – District 1
Gaurav Mishra, 2nd Vice Chair – District 1
Joel San Juan – District 1
Dr. Rosolyn Harper – District 2
Robert Alm – District 2
Robin Sales, Member-At-Large – District 3
Minola Clark Manson, 1st Vice Chair – District 4
Kathy Watkins – District 4
Amanda Berry, Chair – District 4
John Byrom – District 5
Donald Romo – District 5
Aaron Byzak – District 5

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT IN PERSON
Janice Luna-Reynoso – District 1
Julie Hayden, Member-At-Large – District 2
Dr. Devesh – District 3
Stuart Gaiber – District 3
Supervisor Lawson-Remer – #21

MEMBER PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE
Jessica Kramer – District 3, ADA Accommodation

STAFF TO THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD
Nadia Privara Brahms, 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 Amanda Berry at 2:29 p.m. in person and via Zoom.

II. CONSENT CALENDAR

BHAB approved the following consent calendar item:

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes from the meeting of December 4, 2025.

AYES: 13 NAYS: 0 ABSTENTIONS: 0

III. NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

Total of five (5) in-person comments and five (5) via Zoom comments.

In-Person Comments:

- Jerry Hall, with BHAB Rehab, expressed the importance of BHAB members attending the recent state training in San Diego. He emphasized the importance of addressing this through remote

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training and stressed that full engagement and accountability are critical given the urgency of community needs.

- Katie Medlin, a representative of The International Rescue Committee (IRC), shared information on the California Commission for Behavioral Health Project, which focuses on improving outcomes for immigrant and refugee communities through community workshops, organizational capacity building, and advocacy efforts.
- Robert Alm, BHAB member, highlighted the role of involuntary treatment for individuals with severe mental illness and referenced the Lanterman-Petris-Short (LPS) Act as one mechanism for facilitating access to treatment.
- Jenna Ramsey, Project Manager for Pacific Clinics, discussed the ELEVATE program, a grant-funded initiative offering peer support, training, and job placement. She noted that expanding the list of eligible employers could broaden placement options and strengthen program participation.
- Yusef Miller, with Saving Lives in Custody California, invited BHAB members and the public to a Mental Health Town Hall scheduled for March 2 at the Southeastern Live Well Center. The event will include presenters and families impacted by in-custody deaths.

In-Person Comments via Zoom:

- June Dudas expressed the County and BHAB to utilize provisions of the LPS Act and consider evidence-based approaches used in other counties jurisdiction.
- Mary Jo O'Brien, a community member, reported that the Peer Council Executive Committee announced the formation of a new advocacy group, San Diego Peers, focused on expanding peer support and recovery navigation services.
- Madison expressed distinctions between marijuana and alcohol usage in policy development, referencing differences in psychiatric impacts and potential effects on youth, and emphasized on evidence-based approaches and prevention efforts.
- Robert Forte, CEO of Peer Professionals of California, advocated for expanding peer-led programs and utilizing ELEVATE grant resources to support peer professionalization under Senate Bill 803.
- Becky Rapp discussed on the proposed Socially Equitable Cannabis Program, noting behavioral health considerations for rural areas and requested science-based review and community engagement as the program advances.

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IV. ACTION ITEM: ESTABLISHING THE 2026 SUBCOMMITTEES

Public comments: Total of two (2) in-person public comments were received.

- Jerry Hall, with BHAB Rehab, suggested forming a subcommittee to review crisis care systems, including hotlines, sobering centers, and jail-based interventions, and to use data to inform system planning.
- Robert Alm, BHAB member, suggested forming a subcommittee on involuntary treatment to review applicable laws and develop recommendations.

ACTION ITEM: ESTABLISHING THE 2026 SUBCOMMITTEES

On motion of Gaurav Mishra, seconded by Robin Sales, the action item of establishing the 2026 subcommittees was approved.

- Continuum of Care for Children Youth and Adults Impacted by Mental Health and Substance Use
- Involuntary Treatment – Lanterman-Petris-Short

AYES: 13 NAYS: 0 ABSTENTIONS: 0

V. ALCOHOL AND DRUG SERVICE PROVIDER ASSOCIATION (ADSPA) UPDATE

Marisa Varond, President, ADSPA and Golby Rahimi Saylor, Mental Health Contractors Association updated on the following:

- An overview on the short-term impacts of the January Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funding rescissions, including immediate notifications, temporary terminations, and rapid reinstatements that created staffing and service disruptions for several local behavioral health agencies.
- San Diego County's behavioral health system services are funded through multiple federal, state, and local sources; therefore, disruptions in one funding stream can affect the broader continuum of care.
- Transparency and coordinated planning across providers and funding partners were highlighted, including understanding the full range of complementary services and funding sources that support access to behavioral health care.

Sarah Dawe, Deputy Director of Legislative Policy, Economic Development and Government Affairs (EDGA) updated on the following:

- The Office of Economic Development and Government Affairs (EDGA) oversee the County's legislative and government affairs activities, guided by an annual Board-approved legislative program that outlines advocacy priorities and policy direction.
- Key County advocacy priorities include protecting the social safety net and supporting behavioral health services, with ongoing engagement at the state and federal levels and coordination with legislative teams in Washington, D.C., Sacramento, and BHS.
- EDGA monitors rapid policy developments and works to support timely adjustments through coordinated advocacy efforts, expressing readiness to assist County departments as needed.

VI. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- Announced the appointment of Dorita Sondereker as Hospital Administrator for the San Diego County Psychiatric Hospital, effective January 9, 2026.
- Provided updates on ongoing BHS initiatives, including redesign of Clubhouse programs to align with Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) and BH-CONNECT policy frameworks, and progress on the County's first Children's Crisis Residential facility scheduled for completion in Fall 2026.
- Reported site visits and program development activities, including the new Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) substance use residential treatment facility in National City, which will be co-located with recuperative care services.
- Highlighted workforce and community-planning efforts, including the BHSA Community Planning ad hoc subcommittee and the statewide Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Scholarship Program supporting workforce expansion.
- Recognized significant service contributions, including Dr. Piedad Garcia's 40-year milestone.
- Noted recent County budget engagement activities leading into the release of the Recommended Budget and the start of the public comment period.

VII. CHAIR'S REPORT

Amanda Berry, Chair, BHAB, yielded time to Board Supervisor, Vice Chair, Monica Montgomery-Steppe, to provide the following updates:

- Overview of the initiative to optimize the County's specialty behavioral health plan, including the establishment of an ad hoc subcommittee to oversee the BHS transformation.
- The transition of BHS will require comprehensive planning related to fundings, and a consultant has been retained to provide specialized support throughout the forthcoming fiscal year budget process.

Amanda Berry, Chair, BHAB provided the following updates:

- The board aims to strengthen its role as a trusted, strategic partner in shaping a responsive behavioral health system by contributing value through informed discussions, accountability, and meaningful community representation.
- BHAB is actively strengthening its role in county decision-making by engaging directly with the Chief Administrative Officer, Ebony Shelton, and other key offices to ensure our input is meaningfully applied.BHAB is actively strengthening its role in county decision-making by engaging directly with the Chief Administrative Officer, Ebony Shelton, and other key offices to ensure our input is meaningfully applied..
- Volunteers are needed for two committees: Healthy San Diego and Health Services Advisory Board.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Jessica Kramer, BHAB member, provided the following announcement:
  - The Committee for Persons with Disabilities meets on the third Wednesday of each month from 3:00–5:00 p.m. and has prioritized advancing disability accommodations within behavioral health services.
- Bill Stewart, BHAB member, provided the following announcement:
  - California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives will be having a Substance Use disorder (SUD) Voice for Change listening session on February 18th.
  - California Association of Local Behavioral health Boards and Commissions (CALBHBC) held its quarterly meeting on January 23rd in San Diego.
  - The CARE Act Work Group is holding their quarterly meeting on February 11, 2026.

IX. MEETING ADJOURNMENT

On motion of Amanda Berry, seconded by Gaurav Mishra, the meeting was adjourned at 4:32 p.m.