May 7, 2026
Behavioral Health Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT IN PERSON
William "Bill" Stewart – District 1
Janice Luna-Reynoso – District 1
Dr. Gaurav Mishra, 2nd Vice Chair – District 1
Joel San Juan – District 1
Dr. Rosolyn Harper – District 2
Dr. Julie Hayden, Member at Large – District 2
Skylar Phillips – District 2
Robin Sales, Member at Large – District 3
Dr. Devesh Vashishtha – District 3
Minola Clark Manson, 1st Vice Chair – District 4
Kathy Watkins – District 4
Brad Stone – District 4
Amanda Berry, Chair – District 4
John Byrom – District 5
Donald Romo – District 5
Aaron Byzak – District 5

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT IN PERSON
Robert Alm – District 2
Stuart Gaiber – District 3
Supervisor Terra Lawson-Remer - Seat 21

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE
Jessica Karamer – 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 2:31 p.m. in person and via Zoom.

II. CONSENT CALENDAR

On motion of William "Bill" Stewart, seconded by Kathy Watkins, the following consent calendar items were approved:

- Approval of the meeting minutes from April 2, 2026.

AYES: 15 NAYS: 1 ABSTENTIONS: 0

DRAFT

III. NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

Total of three (3) in-person comments, one (1) via Zoom comments, and one (1) e-comments.

In-Person Comments:

- Jonathan O, founder of soberwars.com, shared that insufficient funding for sober living homes has left many people without vital recovery support and expressed support for Assembly Bill 255 as a strong measure to direct resources toward drug and alcohol-free environments for those committed to rebuilding their lives.
- Kathleen Derby, with San Diego Peers, emphasized that people with lived experience need to help lead and create peer programs in addition to providing feedback.
- Osama Bayati was grateful for the opportunity to attend the meeting. He is eager to engage with the BHAB board and hope to bring the insights and knowledge back from the community in a meaningful way.

In-Person Comment via Zoom:

- Becky Rapp urged the group to consider the negative impact of permitting cannabis shops, citing a University of California San Diego study showing that marijuana use slows adolescents' cognitive development and is often underreported.

E-Comment:

- Karen Christel, a California Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist, reported that three years of outreach in North County revealed significant unmet needs among unhoused, addicted, trafficked, and mentally ill individuals, and offered to share their experience to help the board better leverage the Medi-Cal Peer Support role, including billing hours directly to Medi-Cal.

IV. PUBLIC HEARING ITEM: BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT (BHSA) THREE-YEAR INTEGRATED PLAN (IP) FOR FISCAL YEARS 2026-2029

Public comment: Total of ten (10) in-person comments and four (4) via Zoom comments.

In-Person Comments:

- Leonor Garrison, Southern Caregiver Resource Center, urged the County to preserve Caregiver resources. Emphasizing caregivers' essential role in the healthcare system. After a personal experience with caring for a loved one that when through a stroke related to dementia, Southern Caregiver Resource Center programs was able to provide resources for them and hope to keep programs like the resource center from being eliminated.
- Roberto Velasquez, Southern Caregiver Resource Center, noted that he believes the integrated plan lacks early-intervention programs for older adults and their caregivers, and urged the county to fund similar programs already offered elsewhere.
- Spshelle Faith Gordon, Jewish Family Services, emphasized the need for community-centered early intervention as most behavioral health issues start before adulthood. Suggesting for more culturally competent, multilingual, and group-based support for high-risk youth and stronger workforce investment in peer specialists, community health workers, and diverse providers.
- Kathleen Derby, San Diego Peers, shared that the peer-run respite program should remain non-clinical and home like to ensure guests feel safe, noting that such respites effectively prevent crises and reduce costs by supporting people before they reach acute crisis levels.
- Jerry Hall expressed his concern that the planning process collaborative aspects, noting that the public is only now seeing a lengthy plan with decisions largely finalized, and urged the body to increase transparency and create a more meaningful participation.
- Kirsten Garrett Montgomery from Strategic Behavioral Health Initiatieces, explained that the integrated plan places children and youth at a disadvantage. She highlighted that although they represent a significant portion of those served, they receive a disproportionately small share of resources, with reductions to youth services occurring even as adult services see increases.

- Nick Deren, San Diego Sober Living, commented on the relationship between treatment and safe housing for successful recovery. He urged increased funding for post-crisis supports like intensive outpatient programs and sober living to ensure people get the right help at the right time.
- Carita Whyte shared that intensive outpatient programs and sober living enabled them to achieve over a year and a half of sobriety after repeated cycles of jail and relapse, crediting these supports with transforming their life and allowing them to care for their five children and maintain long-term stability.
- Kyle Pellerin, San Diego Sober Living, shared that after struggling to obtain insurance and stable housing when moving from out of state, support from a sober-living program kept them from becoming homeless and helped with manage co-occurring challenges, emphasizing that increased sober-living funding would help more achieve stability, maintain sobriety, and reengage productively in the community.
- Bicentennial Poutoa shared that after recently leaving incarceration, the program's support was crucial to their recovery and stay clean.

In-Person Comments via Zoom:

- June Dudas commented the integrated plan, stating that shifting away from full-service partnerships and housing would harm people with serious mental illness, and concerned how the county's is lacking to provide ACT-level FSP services to those with primary substance-use disorders, and noting that the plan promises such services.
- Linda Mimms commented on the integration plan, echoing concerns about the shift away from FSP and housing interventions, and warned that these cuts would severely harm the county's most seriously ill residents who rely on these services for stability and recovery.
- Angela Rowe, Mental Health Contractors Association, expressed concern that the plan underfunds early childhood mental health, noting reports that Action East and Action Central are closing, and clarified that local providers are well-coordinated despite statements in the plan suggesting otherwise.
- Becky Rapp expressed concern that the integrated plan overlooks growing mental health risks from high-potency cannabis use among youth and vulnerable adults, noting that despite references to crises like psychosis and suicide, the plan never mentions cannabis even as access to high-THC products expands, and urged the county to include honest public education and early intervention on marijuana-related harms.

PUBLIC HEARING ITEM: BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT (BHSA) THREE-YEAR INTEGRATED PLAN (IP) FOR FISCAL YEARS 2026-2029

Nadia Privara, BHS Director, Liberty Donnelly, Assistant Director and Chief Strategy and Finance Officer, Kimberly Pauly, Deputy Director for Programs and Services, Kat Briggs, Chief of Communication and Engagement, and Kim De Vera Work, Chief of Epidemiology and Population Health Unit with BHS presented on the following topics regarding the BHSA Public Hearing for BHAB:

- BHSA and Landscape Policy
- Budget Expenditures
- BHSA Integrated Plan
- Shifting from MHSA to BHSA
- Statewide Behavioral Health Goals
- BHSA Funding Categories
- Community Planning Process (CPP) Highlights
- Public Comment Themes Summary
- Future Capacity to Support CPP

V. ACTION ITEM: APPROVE BHAB RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT REGARDING THE DRAFT BHSA INTEGRATED PLAN FOLLOWING THE PUBLIC HEARING

On motion of Joel San Juan, seconded by Minola Clark Manson, the action item Approve BHAB Recommendations to the Department Regarding the Draft BHSA Integrated Plan Following the Public Hearing was approved.

AYES: 14 NAYS: 0 ABSTENTIONS: 0

VI. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEM: BHS PROCUREMENTS AND EXTENSIONS BOARD LETTER DRAFT

Public comment: Total of one (1) in-person comment.

In-Person Comment:

- Jerry Hall shared his importance of reviewing high-value contracts as part of BHAB's responsibilities. Encourage BHAB to examine a small selection of major contracts each year to better understand planned services, community engagement, and the use of funds.

DISCUSSION ITEM: BHS PROCUREMENTS AND EXTENSIONS BOARD LETTER DRAFT

Nadia Privara Brahms, BHS Director, led the discussion on the following:

- Upcoming Board of Supervisors Letter proposing authorization for a series of competitive and single-source procurements needed to support behavioral health service delivery.

ACTION ITEM: BHS PROCUREMENTS AND EXTENSIONS BOARD LETTER DRAFT

On motion of Dr. Devesh Vashishtha, seconded Dr. Gaurav Mishra, the action item BHS Procurements and Extensions Board Letter Draft was approved.

AYES: 11 NAYS: 0 ABSTENTIONS: 3

VII. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT OUTS

BHAB Chair has asked for subcommittee Chairs to follow up with updates via email.

VIII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

- This month a recent testimony took place at a Senate budget hearing proposing to make the Medi-Cal Mobile Crisis benefit continue to be funded. The County will await the State's May Revision budget for confirmation on the proposal's status.

IX. CHAIR'S REPORT

Amanda Berry, Chair, BHAB, provided the following updates:

- Special Executive meeting was held on May 1, 2026 where County Council clarified that the current BHAB subcommittees are not subject to Brown Act requirements since they are temporary, and focus on specific topics. They are to remain non-Brown Act so long as they do not include a quorum of the full board or of the Executive Committee members.
- Subcommittee meetings remain open to community participation. Members may attend and participate if the quorum limits are not met.
- BHAB will revisit subcommittee bylaws for clarity during the upcoming July retreat. Members were asked to complete the retreat availability survey to support planning.

X. ADVISORY BOARD UPDATES: HEALTHY SAN DIEGO, HEALTH SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD, AND OTHER STATE AND LOCAL BOARD

No advisory board updates were provided.

XI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements were provided.

XII. MEETING ADJOURNMENT

On the motion of Dr. Gaurav Mishra, seconded by Amanda Berry, the meeting was adjourned at 5:01 p.m.