BHSA Stakeholder Engagement Updates

BHAB Executive Committee – September 25, 2026

Overview of Activities & Milestones

a. January 2025: Notice of efforts to evolve and enhance department stakeholder engagement efforts to align with Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) changes and requirements
b. February 2025: System of Care (SoC) Council input sessions held to identify strengths to preserve and opportunities to improve engagement activities
c. April 2025-Early 2026: Various activities held with community members and partners to inform the BHSA Integrated Plan (IP) and future engagement approaches
d. 3/17-4/15/26: 30-Day Public Comment Period for BHSA IP
e. 5/7/26: New engagement infrastructure introduced during the BHAB Public Hearing for the BHSA IP
f. 5/19/26: Additional design and proposed facilitation approach discussed with BHSA Community Planning Ad Hoc Subcommittee
g. 6/9/26: San Diego County Board of Supervisors approved submission of the IP to the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)
h. 6/30/26: San Diego County BHSA IP submitted to DHCS
i. 7/1/26: BHSA implementation effective date
j. 9/15/26: Solicitation for Request for Proposals (RFP) for Community Input and Planning Services posted to BuyNet

Building on Prior Efforts

The updated engagement infrastructure is intended to preserve what stakeholders valued about former SoC Councils while addressing opportunities identified through February 2025 input sessions. The goal is to make engagement more inclusive, action-oriented, and clearly connected to planning and system improvement. BHS is taking a multi-pronged approach during BHSA implementation, including department-led efforts, contracted community-led engagement, and continued participation in stakeholder-led meetings and convenings.

Key learnings from February 2025 input sessions included the need to:

- Preserve dialogue time with BHS, subject matter experts, providers, and community partners
- Create more space for two-way discussion and shared problem-solving, rather than primarily information-heavy updates
- Align topics to Community Planning Process (CPP) themes, broaden meeting participation, and maintain space for age-oriented discussions and cross-cutting issues as appropriate (e.g. workforce challenges)
- Strengthen reporting to and complete feedback loops so stakeholders can better see how input connects to planning, implementation, data, outcomes, and future IP updates

Organizing recurring conversations around shared system challenges is intended to help connect community input to opportunities for coordination, shared problem-solving, and system improvement. New Optimal Care Collaborative (OCC) discussions will build on themes identified through 2025-2026 CPP activities and will be informed by statewide behavioral health goals, San Diego County's Optimal Care Pathways models, community experience, and local data. This adjusted approach is intended to support alignment with evolving state behavioral health transformation, planning, and accountability requirements, while maintaining continued attention to equity and cultural and linguistic responsiveness.

BHS is planning for an initial in-person OCC kickoff convening before the end of the current calendar year (tentatively early November 2026), in response to stakeholder interest for one to two in-person convenings annually. Recurring OCC convenings are anticipated to begin in January 2027.

Discussion Items

a. Community Co-Chair Model
   A Community Co-Chair model is intended to support shared ownership and help ensure recurring OCC discussions are informed by community and stakeholder perspectives. Roles and selection processes would continue to be refined based on stakeholder input and operational feasibility; department is recommending an application process similar to BHAB BHSA Community Planning Ad Hoc Subcommittee.

b. OCC Participation and Representation
   A standing, structured convening format across all OCCs is proposed to allow for broad stakeholder participation while creating focused, predictable time for discussions that support continuity, relationship-building, and action planning. Proposed model is 90 minutes, but option to consider a two-hour model to ensure ample time for breakout discussions.

c. Future of BHAB BHSA Community Planning Ad Hoc Subcommittee (sunsetting October 2026)
   With the IP now moving into implementation, BHAB may wish to determine whether the Ad Hoc should continue beyond its scheduled sunset to help advise on remaining implementation details for rollout of the new engagement infrastructure. Community members representing each County supervisorial district previously applied and committed to pre-identified meeting dates that concluded in May 2026.