BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES
3255 CAMINO DEL RIO SOUTH, MAIL STOP P-531
SAN DIEGO, CA 92108-3806
(619) 563-2700 • FAX (619) 563-2705

EBONY N. SHELTON
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

JENNIFER BRANSFORD-KOONS
INTERIM DIRECTOR

October 1, 2026

TO: Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB)

FROM: Jennifer Bransford-Koons, Interim Director, Behavioral Health Services

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES (BHS) DIRECTOR'S REPORT – October 2026

Leadership & Governance Updates

Departmentwide Planning

During this transition period, BHS is focused on keeping daily operations steady and reliable. The department is working to maintain progress on key projects and support a culture grounded in the County's values of integrity, equity, access, excellence, sustainability, and belonging. To help staff feel heard and connected, BHS is working with the Chief Administrative Office and department leaders to hold employee listening sessions across the organization. These sessions give staff a simple and safe way to share experiences and needs. Feedback from these sessions will help shape future staff engagement and support clear communication about leadership updates, department structure, and BHS's role as the County's specialty behavioral health plan. These efforts aim to keep the department stable, supportive, and aligned with community needs during this interim period.

Programs & Service Delivery Updates

Next Move

BHS has continued to expand the County-operated Next Move program during Fiscal Year 2025–26. Next Move provides specialized outpatient behavioral health services to justice-involved youth and youth at risk of justice involvement, with an emphasis on ensuring continuity of care for youth transitioning from juvenile detention to the community. During FY 2025–26, the program served 512 youth through its clinic locations, community-based settings, detention facilities, and telehealth. Services include individual and family therapy, psychiatric assessment and medication management, case management and care coordination, group interventions, and mental competency restoration. Next Move also implemented Functional Family Therapy (FFT) which is an evidence-based, family-focused treatment designed to strengthen family relationships, improve communication and problem-solving, address behaviors contributing to justice involvement, and reduce the likelihood of future involvement in the justice system.

BHS and the Probation Department executed a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishing coordinated referral, information-sharing, pre-release engagement, warm handoff, and care coordination processes for youth transitioning from custody. The MOU represents an important step forward in the County's ongoing California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM)

transformation and implementation of the Justice-Involved Initiative by strengthening the connection between in-custody services and community-based behavioral health care.

Next Move was also recognized with a 2026 National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Award in the Children and Youth category for its innovative approach to bridging in-custody behavioral health care and community-based treatment. Together, these accomplishments strengthen cross-system coordination, expand access to evidence-based and family-focused care, and support improved behavioral health, stability, and justice-related outcomes for youth and their families.

Housing Updates

The Transitional Rent benefit is a statewide Medi-Cal Community Supports service authorized by the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). Although DHCS launched the benefit earlier in 2026, the County began operationalizing its internal processes on July 1, 2026, to align with the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) launch and ensure consistent documentation and coordination. Transitional Rent is a Managed Care Provider (MCP)-approved, MCP-funded housing support that provides up to six months of temporary rental assistance for eligible members experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

To complement this benefit and better align BHSA Housing Interventions with MCPs and local housing providers, the County launched a one-year Flexible Housing Pool (FHP) pilot on July 1, 2026. The pilot is designed to braid BHSA and MCP resources and will fund up to 250 rental subsidies specifically for individuals newly enrolled in Full Service Partnership (FSP), including those served through the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) track. Beginning in mid-September, the FHP pilot is expanding to support the Intensive Case Management (ICM) track under the broader FSP umbrella, making the FHP pilot available to all eligible ACT and ICM members.

Importantly, the FHP pilot does not limit or replace other pathways to Transitional Rent. Members may continue to access Transitional Rent directly through their MCPs outside of the FHP pilot, as Transitional Rent remains an MCP-funded resource separate from BHSA housing subsidies.

In parallel, the BHS Housing & Homelessness team is collaborating closely with MCPs to expand provider and member awareness of Transitional Rent. Educational materials, including one-page fact sheets, process workflows, and a co-branded Housing Support Plan (HSP), are published on the BHS webpage and updated in alignment with BHSA guidance.

The County also maintains a navigation portal through 211 San Diego, offering MCP-specific housing navigation resources for both members and providers. Outreach efforts continue to include virtual and in-person presentations delivered to partners such as the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) Homeless Hub, the DHCS Substance Use Disorder Conference, the Healthy San Diego Consumer and Professionals Advisory Committee (CPAC), and multiple Continuum-of-Care committees across BHS Mental Health and SUD networks.

Beyond Transitional Rent and the FHP pilot, BHS continues to support the region's broader housing system through significant, ongoing investments across multiple housing pathways:

- **Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)**
  BHS supports more than 1,300 PSH units across 43 developments, leveraging Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding, No Place Like Home (NPLH) allocations, and partnerships with the San Diego Housing Commission. Thirteen NPLH developments are already operating or in lease-up, with eight more in financing—representing 444 PSH units in development.

- **Homekey Sites**
  BHS delivers supportive services at five Homekey developments, providing voluntary, wraparound care—outreach, case management, tenancy supports, crisis intervention-embedded directly within permanent supportive housing settings. A sixth Homekey development-under the County's Homekey+ expansion - is scheduled to come online in winter 2027.

- **Behavioral Health Bridge Housing (BHBH)**
  BHS received $42 million in BHBH funding and administers $17 million in BHBH funding to expand and stabilize residential care options. This includes 602 Augmented Services Program (ASP) slots, with 368 funded through BHBH and 234 through BHSA, increasing staffing, oversight, and individualized supports within licensed Adult Residential Facilities (ARF). In addition, BHBH funding supports Short-Term Bridge Housing, including 173 dedicated slots, expanding short-term interim housing capacity for individuals with behavioral health needs and providing critical stabilization options within the housing continuum.

- **Community Care Expansion – Preservation (CCE-P)**
  BHS has invested approximately $9.9 million in capital improvements and $6.7 million in operating subsidies to stabilize licensed residential care facilities, protecting long-term housing options for individuals with complex behavioral health needs.

- **BHSA Housing Interventions**
  Beginning July 1, 2026, BHSA creates a long-term framework for housing stability beyond Transitional Rent. Members transitioning from MCP-funded Transitional Rent may access months 7–12 of county-funded BHSA Housing Interventions, and BHS is working with State technical assistance to design long-term models that maintain housing stability beyond year one.

These combined investments reflect the department and the County's broader commitment to strengthening the full housing continuum—from interim housing and recovery residences to permanent supportive housing and enhanced residential care capacity—ensuring people with significant behavioral health needs have access to safe, stable, long-term housing solutions.

Community Engagement, Public Participation & Partner Coordination

Improving Follow-Up After Emergency Department Visits

BHS partnered with UCSD, Kaiser Permanente, and Blue Shield Promise, through the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) Behavioral Health Demonstration Collaborative to strengthen coordination for the Follow-Up After Emergency Department Visit for Mental Illness (FUM) and Follow-Up After Emergency Department Visit for Substance Use (FUA) state mandated measures.

Throughout the year-long collaborative, the team set a goal to achieve a 5% increase in joint 30-day follow-up rates for Medi-Cal members by September 2026. Guided by IHI leadership, the team identified coordination gaps and barriers through process mapping; client and provider interviews; collaborative learning sessions; and internal discussions focused on improving access to emergency department (ED) data for timely follow-up. Building on this groundwork, the team implemented an intervention to enhance timely ED data sharing from MCPs to BHS. As part of the intervention, and through a series of Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) planning meetings, MCPs began transmitting daily Admission, Discharge, and Transfer (ADT) files identifying members who visited the emergency department. BHS matched these files to its client database and notified providers to facilitate outreach and appointment scheduling.

The notification process ran from late April through late June 2026, with outcome data collected through July. Following the intervention, the team began exploring strategies to automate data sharing and provider notifications to support long-term sustainability and facilitate possible expansion to additional MCPs. The team is also collecting and analyzing intervention process data to inform future improvements and decision-making. Notably, BHS, Kaiser Permanente, and Blue Shield Promise all exceeded the goal to improve FUA and FUM rates by 5%, highlighting the positive impact of the joint participation in the IHI Collaborative.

Community Input and Planning Services Solicitation
As shared in the May 2026 Director's Report, BHS has been preparing a new Community Input and Planning Services solicitation informed by prior community input and Community Planning Process (CPP) activities. The goal is to strengthen how BHS hears from communities that may face barriers to taking part in traditional County-led meetings and activities.

The Request for Proposals (RFP) is now posted on BuyNet. BHS is seeking community-based organizations to support ongoing outreach, community discussions, and input with six communities of focus:

- Black/African American Communities;
- Hispanic/Latino Communities;
- LGBTQ+ Communities;
- Tribal Communities;
- Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Immigrant, and Refugee Communities; and
- Justice-Impacted, Reentry, Housing-Insecure, and Veteran Communities.

These communities align with populations and priorities reflected across BHSA, CalAIM, and other state and local behavioral health planning efforts. The County may award up to six contracts, with one for each community.

These community-led efforts will add to other ways BHS gathers input moving forward, including department-led engagement and forthcoming Optimal Care Collaboratives. Together, these efforts are intended to collectively support ongoing community planning under BHSA and help BHS hear from a broader range of people as services and priorities are planned. Proposals are due to the County's Department of Purchasing and Contracting by October 30, 2026. Full solicitation details and updates are available on BuyNet.

Workforce & Capacity-Building Initiatives

ELEVATE Behavioral Health Workforce Fund
Under the administration of the Policy & Innovation Center (PIC), the department's ELEVATE Behavioral Health Workforce Fund (ELEVATE) continues to move further into implementation across its workforce development strategies. ELEVATE is a $75 million, five-year initiative that began with MHSA Innovation funding and has transitioned into the applicable BHSA framework. Building on the implementation milestones reported in August 2026, including program launch, early implementation, and baseline data collection, work this fiscal year continues to expand participation and move additional program components into active operations. ELEVATE now includes more than 60 organizations across a growing network of behavioral health providers, colleges and universities, workforce organizations, and community-based organizations. ELEVATE strategies span student financial support, peer support training and placement, behavioral health apprenticeships, paid internships and clinical training, psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner education, and other approaches intended to strengthen entry into and retention within the behavioral health workforce. Most ELEVATE upskilling programs are

now in operations, with continued development of training, internship, and apprenticeship opportunities, including a Community Health Worker apprenticeship pathway planned for spring 2027. The Fall 2026 student loan funding cycle is also underway, building on the educational partnerships previously reported. As programs mature, BHS and PIC are continuing to review early implementation experience, operational data, and feedback from participating partners and employers to understand where adjustments may be needed and help inform longer-term decisions about sustaining or expanding strategies.

Training and Technical Assistance for Community-Based Organizations
Under the administration of Altarum Institute, BHS is also advancing a Medi-Cal Training and Technical Assistance initiative to support local community-based providers. A contract was executed on July 1, 2026, and efforts focus on helping interested community-based organizations build their capacity to achieve related certifications to participate in Medi-Cal behavioral health services and broadening opportunities for organizations serving diverse communities to participate in the public behavioral health system. Altarum Institute is currently in the program start-up phase. Initial work includes development of intake processes, online resources and tools, and future training and learning opportunities. The project team is also beginning early assessment work to better understand community and system needs and help shape future supports.

While the two initiatives have different primary focuses, BHS sees natural opportunities for them to complement one another. As both develop, BHS looks forward to exploring how workforce development, employer needs, and community-based organization capacity-building can be better connected to support a strong and sustainable behavioral health system across the region.

Recognition & Achievements

Children's Residential Care Facility Groundbreaking
On August 25, BHS celebrated the groundbreaking of a new Children's Crisis Residential Care facility at the County's Polinsky Children's Center in Kearny Mesa. Construction is expected to be completed in 2027. The new facility will provide crisis residential treatment services and offer a safe, supportive alternative to hospitalization for children and youth experiencing serious emotional and behavioral health needs.

Substance Use Residential Facility Ribbon Cutting
On September 14, BHS celebrated the ribbon cutting of the new Substance Use Residential Treatment Services facility in National City. The facility will add 73 residential treatment beds and 16 recuperative care beds to expand access to supportive, recovery-focused services for adults experiencing substance use conditions.

Poster Presentations for 2026 California Association of Long-Term Care Medicine Summit
Edgemoor Distinct Part Skilled Nursing Facility will feature four staff posters at the 2026 California Association of Long Term Care Medicine Summit for Excellence in September. Poster content includes:

- International Dysphagia Diet Standardization Initiative (IDDSI) in Long-term Care,
- Meal Consumption Evaluation,
- Care of a Deaf Resident,
- Vaginal Estrogen Therapy Use in Long-term Care

Acceptance of staff submissions reflects the team's commitment to advancing quality care and showcasing innovative practices within the organization. During the summit, all accepted posters will be formally judged, and prizes will be awarded to the top three entries. This recognition highlights the

hard work, expertise, and dedication of Edgemoor staff in contributing to excellence across the long-term care community.

Looking Ahead

Community-Driven Behavioral Health Initiative Information Session
The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) will host an information session on the Community-Driven Behavioral Health Initiative (CDBHI). Under BHSA, responsibility for BHSA-funded population-based behavioral health prevention shifted from county behavioral health departments to CDPH, which now leads and coordinates this work statewide. In partnership with the California Institute for Behavioral Health Solutions (CIBHS), CDPH will share an overview of the prevention-focused Community-Defined Evidence Practices (CDEPs) funding opportunity, including eligibility, the application process, key timelines, and the technical assistance available to organizations interested in applying.

This initiative supports culturally-rooted, community-driven behavioral health prevention strategies designed to promote wellness and reduce stigma before behavioral health conditions develop. Eligible applicants include nonprofit community-based organizations and Tribal entities, with funding intended to help communities implement sustainable, population-focused approaches to behavioral health. Organizations interested in applying are encouraged to attend the upcoming information session.

Date/Time: October 6, 2026, 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM (PST)
Location: Online via Zoom
Registration: https://cibhs-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_nBVjfiV3Qseu6BmLohBsjg#/registration

To learn more, please visit the California Department of Public Health website at the following link: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OPP/Pages/Community-Defined-Evidence-Practices.aspx.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Bransford-Koons

JENNIFER BRANSFORD-KOONS, Interim Director
Behavioral Health Services

c: Ebony N. Shelton, Chief Administrative Officer
Aurora Kiviat Nudd, Assistant Director, Chief Operations Officer
Cecily Thornton-Stearns, LMFT Assistant Director, Chief Program Officer
Liberty Donnelly, Assistant Director, Chief Strategy and Finance Officer