



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD (BHAB) ACTION ITEM SEPTEMBER 5, 2024

CREATING A CHILD AND YOUTH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CONTINUUM FRAMEWORK FOR SAN DIEGO COUNTY (DISTRICTS: ALL)

Under the leadership of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board), behavioral health care in San Diego has been undergoing a profound transformation. Since September 2022, the County has been taking action and making strategic investments to move the local behavioral health care delivery system from a model of care driven by crises to one centered on continuous care and prevention. These efforts, broadly referred to as the Behavioral Health Continuum of Care (Continuum of Care), have been guided by data, focused on equity, and designed to engineer collaborative work across silos, within and outside of government.

The work performed thus far has been intensely focused on recalibrating the Continuum of Care to more appropriately service the behavioral health needs of adults, particularly those experiencing homelessness and/or experiencing concurrent diagnoses of serious mental illness and substance use disorders.

With this progress well underway, the County is now poised to turn its attention to the youth mental health crisis and to learn from and leverage the work done for adults. Specifically, Behavioral Health Services' creation and utilization of the Optimal Care Pathways (OCP) model, a data-informed algorithm that quantifies optimal utilization across service areas within the behavioral health system. The OCP model recalibrates and expands current services, and suggests some additional types of services to remove barriers to care, reduce per capita cost, and most importantly, connect individuals to the care they need, when they need it to ensure wellness over the long-term. To address gaps and barriers, the model quantifies the optimal utilization needed across various service categories and specifically demonstrates the urgent need to develop and expand care and services, inclusive of infrastructure, specifically for Medi-Cal eligible clients who have behavioral health needs to facilitate connection to services and eliminate waitlists. It also outlines client care pathways to map where clients with behavioral health conditions are entering from, which levels of care they are going to, what barriers are in their way, and what is preventing them from receiving optimal care. It also identifies common characteristics and specialty needs among clients and any missed opportunities for optimization to inform the development of ways to anticipate need and necessary adjustments going forward.

The ultimate goal of the OCP model is to shore up a responsive and sustainable system of care that connects individuals with the right care and alleviates existing bottlenecks. The goal is set to be achieved through incentivizing payment models and data-driven adjustments to infrastructure and services to best align with client needs with an intentional effort towards prevention and health maintenance. An ideal way to ensure that there is a continuous and coordinated Continuum of Care that includes children and youth is to develop a Child and Youth Behavioral Health Continuum Framework leveraging the OCP model.

These actions are proposed to directly address the youth mental health crisis locally and the County's immediate need for a comprehensive, data-driven approach to set a defined trajectory for the portion of San Diego's Continuum of Care that services the behavioral health needs of children and youth. By leveraging the OCP model, the County can assess and quantify the mental health needs of youth ages 0 to 21 and identify the gaps and barriers across the system of care, focusing specifically on Medi-Cal eligible individuals, as well as examining services within the broader context of current threats and larger system challenges. This will enable the transformative vision required during a time of crisis and ensure the equitable investment of resources.

This action requests that the Chief Administrative Officer prepare a report assessing the impacts of recent policy changes to the behavioral health services for infants, early childhood, adolescents, and teens and to identify a short-term action plan with strategies to maintain and/or enhance services, including, but not limited to, leveraging CalAIM Payment Reform and workforce development investments. Additionally, this action will create a Child and Youth Behavioral Health Continuum Framework across the 0 to 21 age continuum that is based on data analytics, consistent with the previous work performed on the OCP Model conducted by the Behavioral Health Services Department, that will be informed by community stakeholder feedback and will quantify optimal service levels to inform a comprehensive long-term plan to address identified gaps in services.

If approved, these actions will set the County on an accelerated path to operating a Continuum of Care that supports San Diegans mental health across the entire lifespan. Research consistently demonstrates that many factors influencing mental health can be modified during early childhood and adolescents, often preventing mental health challenges from emerging at all. Research also establishes that early intervention and support lessen suffering, reduces suicide, and improves quality of life well into the future. While the County continues to work diligently to maintain its current services and programs supporting children and youth, these additional steps requested today will further sustain and enhance the services, programs, infrastructure, and workforce needs of the County's Behavioral Health Continuum of Care for the betterment of today's youth who are tomorrow's adults.

It is, THEREFORE, staff's recommendation that BHAB supports the approvals and authorizations needed to implement the above recommendation.