



**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD (BHAB) ACTION ITEM
MARCH 3, 2022**

**AUTHORIZE COMPETITIVE SOLICITATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING TO
CARE INITIATIVE CONTRACTS**

On June 8, 2021, San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) approved a final American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding framework to support the residents of San Diego. The approved funding framework included the use of ARPA funding to address the behavioral health service needs of children, youth and families which were identified as high priority.

On December 7, 2021, the U.S. Surgeon General issued an advisory highlighting the urgent need to address the nation's youth mental health crisis and outlined the pandemic's unprecedented impacts on the mental health of America's youth and families, as well as the mental health challenges that existed long before the pandemic. The advisory outlined a series of recommendations to improve youth mental health which includes providing resources and technical assistance to strengthen school-based mental health programs which include improving education about mental health, increasing screening of students for mental health concerns, investing in additional staff (e.g., school counselors) to support student mental health needs, improving care coordination, and financing school-based mental health services, building school-provider partnerships and coordinating resources to support prevention, screening, early intervention, and mental health treatment for youth in school-based settings.

To advance recommendations outlined in the advisory, and in alignment with other efforts to support youth, the Screening to Care Initiative was created to address mental health treatment needs for middle school students working with school districts across the county. Today's action seeks approval to authorize a competitive solicitation for the procurement of *Screening to Care* services which will offer mental health services to middle school students in school districts through six contracts operating across the six County of San Diego regions.

Today's action supports the Board of Supervisor's priorities to provide inclusive services that yield better outcomes for vulnerable populations; and also supports the County's *Live Well San Diego* vision by ensuring access to services, promoting health and well-being in children and families, which promote a region which is building better health, living safely, and thriving.

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