



# County of San Diego

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TO: Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB)

FROM: Luke Bergmann, Ph.D., Director, Behavioral Health Services

## **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES (BHS) DIRECTOR'S REPORT – APRIL 2024**

### **Efforts to Optimize Community and Stakeholder Engagement Continue**

Over the past calendar year, BHS has made substantial progress towards building its capacity to enhance and expand its community engagement in alignment with key factors driving such operations from various levels. The following information serves as a cumulative update of activities and strategies piloted and overseen by BHS' Communication & Engagement (C&E) Team, which was established in November 2022 following Phase 4 of department reorganization efforts first initiated in 2021.

### **Key Drivers and Mechanisms for Community Engagement**

Three key drivers push forward community engagement efforts for BHS:

- The **Community Program Planning (CPP) Process**, a component of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) passed by California voters in 2004, drives community engagement efforts from the state level. The CPP Process dictates that planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs and services made possible through MHSA funds involve the community. Counties receiving MHSA funding are required to collaborate and partner with consumers and share information and resources. For more information, visit the following link: [sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/bhs/mental\\_health\\_services\\_act](https://sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/bhs/mental_health_services_act).
- The **County of San Diego's General Management System (GMS)** drives community engagement efforts at the enterprise level across all County business groups, including the Health and Human Services Agency (HHS). The GMS is the County's operational approach to planning and decision-making and dictates enterprise-wide goals. In January 2022, the GMS was updated, and community engagement was elevated to the center of all County operations. Adopted by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board), the GMS imagines a just, sustainable, and resilient future for all, made feasible by community partnerships, enterprise-wide collaboration, operational accountability, strategic planning, and employee connection. Broadly defined, 'community engagement' includes any activities that provide members of the San Diego County community with opportunities to play a meaningful role – through their participation – in shaping policies, programs, and decisions.
- The **Community Experience Partnership (CEP)** is a departmental initiative to integrate data and community input to guide priorities and inform and support BHS' planning and program

development to equitably improve behavioral health and wellness across the Behavioral Health Continuum of Care (CoC). The CEP is made possible through the collective efforts of various BHS teams, as well as contracts with UC San Diego's Child and Adolescent Services Research Center (CASRC) and Health Services Research Center (HRSC). Interactive data dashboards and community engagement reports developed as a result of the CEP allow individuals to explore behavioral health trends in San Diego County and enable users to compare results across regions, populations, and subgroups.

Similarly, there are three primary mechanisms through which community engagement is accomplished by the department:

- **BHS' C&E Team** represents a centralized unit within the department responsible for various internal and external public messaging and public participation efforts, including intradepartmental coordination of BHS communications and engagement, and staff support for year-round, community-based activities. Since March 2023, the C&E Team has concentrated its efforts on developing the infrastructure necessary to support existing and emerging operations, reflecting on learnings from community input sessions, refining approaches to improve the relevancy of activities, and initiating planning discussions with community members and organizations to deliver desired programming in a more tailored fashion.

Key activities within the last year of this team have focused on hiring and creating new tools to support the coordination of community requests, reporting/evaluation, and more frequent and standardized communications using multiple communication channels. The department has also dedicated a large portion of its time over the last several months to better understanding how San Diego County communities would like to be engaged and assessing how the department can best meet people "where they are" both figuratively and physically. Thirteen additional team members were hired to support C&E-led efforts between October 2023 and February 2024, including one full-time staff to support BHS Communications, four full-time behavioral health-focused Community Health Workers to support outreach efforts, one full-time temporary Analyst to support BHAB coordination, and six non-clinical, part-time students to support Health Promotion events.

Additionally, C&E Team continues to utilize the Community Request Form in an effort to support community events and activities through BHS staffing at events, educational materials, and/or connections to BHS subject matter experts and/or contractors. Since September 2023, the team has logged over 20 requests from items including tabling requests to highlight BHS resources and career pathways, threading to support naloxone distribution to BHS contractors, and more.

- BHS has also enhanced its community engagement through **collaborations with departments and staff outside BHS**; in particular, through close partnerships with Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities (HSEC) and the *Live Well San Diego* (LWSD) Support Team. These two groups are responsible for an array of opportunities and platforms that can be leveraged to embed, cross-thread, and increase the dissemination of behavioral health information to communities and stakeholders in the region.

BHS has collaborated with HSEC and the LWSD Support Team extensively over the past year to increase awareness and visibility of important resources, programs, and services. Several educational presentations have been provided to regional Community Leadership Teams coordinated by HSEC, including multiple presentations on local crisis response services, naloxone administration trainings, and naloxone distributions. Recently, BHS led a discussion at the North County Community Leadership Team to share regional-specific data related to suicide and overdose to better inform community members and county staff of recent trends and opportunities to address these issues. BHS is also working closely to embed Community Health

Workers (CHW) within HSEC to conduct local behavioral health outreach and education to support prevention and early intervention efforts. The department has partnered with the LWSD Support Team to bring stigma reduction and mental wellness activities to broader audiences in-person and virtually. There have been several breakout sessions and presentations provided to the community at scale through the Live Well Advance and LWSD Sector network. Additionally, the C&E Team has collaborated closely with the LWSD Youth Sector to develop behavioral health town halls, public messaging campaigns, and youth engagement opportunities like the *Scoop From You(Th) Challenge*. BHS has also partnered to integrate BHS updates and promote behavioral health resources through the groups' respective electronic newsletters and social media accounts. Most recently, as part of recent flood recovery efforts, BHS partnered with the County's Office of Emergency Services, HSEC, the LWSD Support Team, and other County staff to share key resources to individuals and families displaced by the January flood disaster through a series of virtual telebriefings.

Additionally, BHS has leveraged relationships among the Office of Equitable Communities (OEqC) by supporting the coordination of crisis response panels at regional Community Leadership Team Meetings that have raised awareness of resources accessible to the public including Optum Access and Crisis Line (ACL), Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT), and Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT).

- The C&E Team currently oversees a total of four **contracts** that augment and enable public messaging and public participation efforts. These include contracts with Rescue Agency for stigma reduction, suicide prevention, and substance use prevention media campaigns (Contract #561649); UC San Diego's Child and Adolescent Research Center (CASRC) and Health Services Research Center (HRSC) for large-volume engagement services (e.g., interviews, focus groups, and large community listening sessions) (Contract #566007); Jewish Family Service of San Diego for *Breaking Down Barriers* outreach and education (Contract #559599); and Center for Community Research for prevention media advocacy services and support (Contract #567084). Efforts are currently underway to re-procure and expand the department's public messaging and outreach and education contracts in response to community input and Board directives. The Board also authorized a new solicitation in May 2023 to increase the department's capacity to produce more readily ad-hoc, responsive campaigns, including public messaging to promote departmental programs and services. These contracts are anticipated to be awarded and operational by 2025, pending funding availability.

### **Reflecting on Input and Refining Approaches**

Although great strides have been made toward increasing BHS' capacity to perform this work and many other efforts are in progress, there is still a lot to be done to ensure quality community engagement activities are conducted comprehensively throughout the year, at a more regular cadence, and with increased participation and representation. In October 2023, key strategies to improve BHS' community engagement were presented to BHAB for approval based upon recommendations from community members and organizations. Recommendations included the following:

- Aligning educational and resource event locations as much as possible to communities experiencing greater health disparities (according to the California Healthy Places Index).
- Connecting with community and faith-based organizations, CHWs, peers, individuals with lived experience and partnering with them to envision and plan behavioral health promotion opportunities.
- Holding more community events and engagement activities at community "hubs" frequented by youth and families (e.g., YMCA locations and County or City libraries), including outdoor spaces and places of worship.
- Coordinating more activities focused on enhancing individuals' and families' behavioral health literacy, mental wellness, and fostering empathy and socio-emotional competence.

- Hosting a higher volume of smaller-scale input sessions, in addition to larger listening sessions and a static, online input form, to allow for more tailored discussions.
- Providing giveaways for participants (e.g., food) and adjusting the time of activities to occur in the late afternoon or early evening to encourage participation.
- Ensuring “report back” plans to disclose how community input has been implemented.
- Seeking additional opportunities to engage and support Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in accessing key resources and services.
- Encouraging pre-registration mechanisms to support planning, coordination, and identification of participant language needs.
- Scheduling community engagement opportunities far enough in advance to support a minimum of two weeks of marketing efforts across multiple communication platforms, including distribution of physical flyers and social media-based promotions.

Moving forward, the Health Promotion branch of BHS' C&E Team will be working closely with stakeholders, community-based organizations, and contractors to design and refine opportunities focused on these recommendations.

### **Update on California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Funded Youth Suicide Crisis Response and Reporting Pilot**

The Youth Suicide Crisis Response and Reporting (YSCRR) Pilot Program was established through one-time funding in the Governor's 2022-2023 Budget to develop and test models allowing for youth suicide as reportable events. The pilot program will be funded through Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-25 and its administration will be overseen by the CDPH Office of Suicide Prevention (OSP).

The YSCRR Pilot Program strives to provide equitable, timely and culturally responsive services for youth and young adults between the ages of 12 and 25, bolstering local suicide prevention and post-intervention strategies for rapidly and comprehensively responding to youth suicides and suicide attempts. Activities for this pilot program aim to augment existing suicide prevention efforts and crisis response resources by leveraging the CHW model. This model focuses on increasing the readiness of youth and young adults, families, education stakeholders, and others in the community to access local crisis response services in response to a suicide attempt.

The YSCRR CHWs have been prepared to serve as regional liaisons and to perform these activities through a series of five training sessions developed by BHS's C&E Team. The CHW training series featured a tailored approach towards the objectives of the pilot program and its targeted outreach to youth populations. CHWs received a comprehensive training on essential access and crisis services needed to effectively address the needs of at-risk youth including:

- Access and Crisis Line (ACL)
- Mobile Crisis Response Teams (MCRT)
- Psychiatric Emergency Response Teams (PERT)
- Crisis Stabilization Units (CSUs)
- Outpatient Behavioral Health Clinics
- Youth Programs and Services, and SchoolLink

The training series also fostered a cohesive approach towards collaboration and coordination among existing suicide prevention efforts. By facilitating linkages across various agencies and programs, CHWs were primed to enhance planning, coordination, and delivery of outreach and education efforts within the community. This holistic approach aims to increase community awareness and literacy of existing resources but also fosters a more robust and responsive network for addressing youth suicide crises. As newly trained CHWs are poised for deployment to the community in April 2024, the culmination of this training series marks a pivotal milestone in the implementation and impact of the YSCRR. Through their concerted efforts and knowledge, CHWs are positioned to make tangible strides in preventing youth suicides and ensuring timely intervention and support for those in crisis.

### **Update on CARE Act Program Informational Sessions**

In September 2022, the Community Assistance Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Act program was signed into law by Governor Newsom as a statewide initiative to connect people with schizophrenia or other psychotic disorders to a voluntary treatment plan. San Diego County is one of seven pilot counties in California that launched the CARE Act program on October 1, 2023.

To support the pilot, Behavioral Health Services co-facilitated six CARE Act program Information Sessions with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) San Diego. Legal Aid Society of San Diego and Access and Crisis Line (ACL) were also present as a resource to respond to questions. During the sessions, attending stakeholders and community members connected with subject matter experts to receive an overview of program process and qualifications. Notably, subject matter experts from BHS, ACL, and Legal Aid Society received and addressed more than 130 participant questions during the information sessions.

CARE Act program information session outreach spanned over 200 community-based organizations, health centers, places of worship, clubhouses, and more.

For more information on the CARE Act program, visit:

[https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/bhs/CARE\\_act\\_program.html](https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/bhs/CARE_act_program.html).

### **On the Horizon: Upcoming Activities and Focus Areas**

Looking ahead, BHS is preparing for several upcoming community engagement activities, including continued efforts to inform the public of the CARE Act Program in partnership with NAMI San Diego and other community organizations. Staff are also actively engaged in implementation planning to increase regional readiness to operationalize changes to involuntary behavioral health treatment according to the provisions in state Senate Bill 43. BHS will also be examining current and prospective mechanisms to reach additional stakeholder populations outlined by California Proposition 1, in addition to initiating planning to revise departmental operations.

As it pertains to broader public messaging efforts, BHS will be working closely with the LWSD Youth Sector, local youth-led and youth-serving organizations, and its media campaign contractor to launch a series of new content and materials to support youth mental health and youth suicide crisis response by Summer 2024. BHS will also be working closely with HSEC, Community Leadership Teams, and other community-based coalitions over the next several months to host a series of CEP data workshops which will subsequently inform the development of tailored micro-campaigns for BIPOC groups.

## **BHS 2024 SPECIAL EVENTS & ACHIEVEMENTS**

### **Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) 30-Day Public Review Period**

The Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) FY 2024-25 Annual Update will be posted to the BHS website for a 30-day public review and comment period. The review period is expected to begin on April 2, 2024, and end on May 2, 2024, when final comments will be heard at the May BHAB meeting. The MHSA FY 2024-25 Annual Update will go before the Board of Supervisors on June 4, 2024, subject to change, for review and approval, as required by the Mental Health Services Oversight & Accountability Commission (MHSOAC).

### **Community Expo for Mental Wellness Kicks off *May is Mental Health Matters Month***

May is Mental Health Matters Month (MIMHMM) is on the horizon. BHS and the NAMI San Diego have partnered to host the Community Wellness Expo at the "I am NAMIWalks" 5K event on April 27, 2024, at Liberty Station. The Expo will kick off MIMHMM and offer mental health-related resources and interactive activities for community participants. The Expo will feature over 100 exhibitors with a combination of community organizations, providers, and County departments to provide mental health-related resources along with fun and interactive activities and promotional materials for all to enjoy.

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MIMHMM provides the opportunity for everyone to come together to illuminate mental health awareness to end the stigma. Bringing forth this awareness is crucial to helping people reach out for the assistance they need. Stay tuned for more information on upcoming MIMHMM events and materials by visiting the *It's Up to Us* website at Up2SD.org.

The kickoff event will be held on Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup> at Preble Field in NTC Park at Liberty Station from 7:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. This event is **FREE** to attend. Please share widely with your networks.

**EVENT INFORMATION:**

- **Date:** Saturday, April 27, 2024
- **Time:** 7:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
- **Location:** [Preble Field](#) in NTC Park at Liberty Station: 2455 Crushing Road, San Diego, CA 92106
- **Cost:** FREE
- **Free Registration for the walk:** [NAMIWalks](#)

For questions about this event, please contact us at [Engage.BHS@sdcountry.ca.gov](mailto:Engage.BHS@sdcountry.ca.gov).

**Critical Issues in Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CICAMH) Conference – April 26, 2024**

Registration is open for the hybrid 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Critical Issues in Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CICAMH) Conference: Breaking Barriers: Innovative Approaches to Youth and Family Mental Well-Being, scheduled for Friday, April 26, 2024. For event details visit the following webpage: <https://cicamh.com/>.

**Children and Youth Mental Health Well-Being Celebration – May 11, 2024**

The NAMI San Diego Community Advocacy Program will host the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Children and Youth Mental Health Well-Being Celebration on Saturday, May 11, 2024, from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the main courtyard of the Grossmont Center mall. This is one of the “Mental Health Matters Month” events. This celebration is free of charge and will offer a variety of fun activities for all ages, opportunity drawings, and more.

Respectfully submitted,

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