



# County of San Diego

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**LUKE BERGMANN, Ph.D.**  
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July 28, 2022

TO: Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB)

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

## **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES DIRECTOR'S REPORT – AUGUST 2022**

### **Behavioral Health Services Collaboration with the City of San Diego**

The County of San Diego (County) Health and Human Services (HHSA) Behavioral Health Services (BHS) department has collaborated with the City of San Diego on several programs and initiatives to provide a coordinated response to the behavioral health needs of community members of the City of San Diego. BHS has closely partnered with the City of San Diego to offer services for some of the City's more vulnerable, including individuals experiencing homelessness, individuals with substance use disorders (SUD) and co-occurring mental health conditions, as well as children who during the pandemic have had limited opportunities for physical activity and social interactions which support their physical and social emotional well-being. The following describe these collaborative initiatives in further detail.

#### **Sobering Services + PLEADS**

Sobering centers are recognized by the California Health Care Foundation as a cost-effective approach to integrate physical health, mental health, and social services for high risk Medi-Cal enrollees. Since 2010, sobering services provide a drug and alcohol-free environment space for individuals (18 years of age and older) who are inebriated and dropped off by health, safety, and law enforcement agencies to be kept a minimum of four (4) hours for sobering purposes in lieu of incarceration. Staff offer printed information on substance use treatment and recovery services to all individuals dropped off and make individual counseling and linkage available once the person has regained functioning. A newer component of the sobering services which has been in operation since 2019 is Prosecution and Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion Services (PLEADS), a nation-wide community-based diversion approach that broadens the target population to include persons who are intoxicated on other narcotic illicit drugs, instead of only alcohol and marijuana. PLEADS participants are individuals (18 years of age and older) who are intoxicated (PC 11550 under the influence of a controlled substance) and dropped off by health, safety, and law enforcement agencies and are kept a minimum of four (4) hours for sobering purposes in lieu of incarceration. Staff also provide engagement, referral, linkage, and transportation services to these individuals.

Both PLEADS and sobering services can serve to link participants to BHS services including substance use and mental health treatment. These services provide an alternative to incarceration for individuals whose only criminal behavior is public intoxication. Incarcerating these individuals diverts health, safety,

and law enforcement resources from more serious or life-threatening situations. Through May 2022 of Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-2022, the Sobering Services program served a total of 2,494 clients countywide and 974 PLEADS clients. The program is currently being operated by McAlister Institute and is expected to be reproposed this fiscal year.

### **Housing Subsidies from the San Diego Housing Commission**

As the Public Housing Agency (or “housing authority”) covering the City of San Diego, the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) administers housing resources for low-income residents in their jurisdiction and plays a pivotal role in addressing homelessness in the region. Since 2001, BHS has partnered with SDHC to provide dedicated permanent and transitional housing resources for persons with behavioral health conditions who are experiencing homelessness in the City of San Diego. To date, SDHC has awarded nearly 1,200 vouchers and subsidies that are dedicated to serve BHS clients, including more than 750 in support of Project One for All (POFA), the Board of Supervisors (BOS)-directed effort—which began in 2016—to provide treatment and housing to residents with serious mental illness (SMI) who were experiencing homelessness. Awarded vouchers and subsidies include:

- More than 800 **Sponsor-Based Subsidies**, administered by select BHS service providers, including 55 for clients with primary substance use diagnoses;
- More than 250 **Project-Based Vouchers**, which are attached to select Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funded permanent supportive housing units, including 25 for one-, two-, and three-bedroom units that are currently leasing up in San Ysidro;
- **Emergency Housing Vouchers**, funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), for mental health and substance use clients enrolled in Adult and Older Adult (AOA) and/or Children's, Youth, and Families (CYF) services;
- 25 subsidies for families experiencing homelessness who have children enrolled at the **Monarch School**;
- **Moving On** subsidies for BHS clients who are clinically stepping down to lower levels of care;
- 11 transitional housing subsidies for clients residing at the **Uptown Safe Haven**.

The housing resources provided by SDHC are an invaluable part of the BHS housing program, providing an array of options to house persons with behavioral health conditions who are experiencing homelessness in San Diego.

### **New Bridge Shelter**

A new sprung structure next to the County's Health Services Complex in the Midway area will be serving as a bridge shelter (Shelter). The Shelter represents a collaboration between the County, City of San Diego, and the SDHC to provide person-centered services to individuals experiencing homelessness who may have mental health and/or substance use conditions. The goal is to provide a safe place to sleep, shelter services, a connection to BHS, and any other needed services for individuals experiencing homelessness. The model is low barrier access to shelter with behavioral health support services (BHSS) to connect participants to BHS.

Referrals for the shelter come from the City of San Diego Coordinated Intake Program referrals, community referrals from the Midway area, San Diego County Psychiatric Hospital (SDCPH), Law Enforcement and Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT), Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT), and other determined entities. The hours of operation for the Shelter and shelter intake are 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. BHSS utilizes a flexible approach to cover a minimum of 40 hours per week, including evening hours. The City of San Diego is responsible for shelter operations, intake, service coordination, transportation, and care coordination using the Coordinated Entry System (CES), Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), and other assistance to determine best steps in shelter, housing, and community services options along with case conference for care coordination services with onsite partners. The County BHSS implements a flexible approach to include case conferencing for care coordination services with onsite partners to assist in determining the next best

steps in shelter, housing, and community services options. The Shelter provides a shelter and service model that advances key initiatives which aligns with the City of San Diego *Community Action Plan on Homelessness* and the County of San Diego's *Framework for Ending Homelessness*, to include strategic domains of services, treatment and outreach, and emergency/interim housing and resources.

### **San Diego County Community Harm Reduction Team (C-HRT) and City of San Diego Harm Reduction Interim Shelter**

The Community Harm Reduction Team (C-HRT) and Harm Reduction Interim Shelter is a joint effort between the County BHS department, the City of San Diego, Homeless Strategies and Solutions Department to provide outreach and engagement to individuals within the City of San Diego who are suffering from chronic substance use conditions or co-occurring mental health issues and who are experiencing homelessness, to connect them with interim shelter options, case management, system navigation, permanent housing, behavioral health services, and medical care.

Family Health Centers of San Diego provides C-HRT street outreach services through multi-disciplinary teams comprised of substance use counselors, peer support, mental health clinician, and nurse practitioner to provide medical consultation. C-HRTs specialize in low barrier engagement through a harm reduction approach, connections to clinically appropriate behavioral health treatment, and designated bridge housing for difficult to engage clients with chronic substance use and co-occurring conditions with the goal of assisting the client in achieving wellness, stability, and permanent housing. Upon initial engagement by C-HRT, individuals are welcomed to the Harm Reduction Interim Shelter with day-to-day operations provided by Alpha Project, offering 24-hour staffing to support up to 44 beds. Family Health Centers of San Diego C-HRT provides case management services and connections to an array of supportive services tailored to diverse populations, including but not limited to, stabilization and housing relocation services, mental health care, and substance abuse treatment.

Services are intended to be a short-term solution to assist individuals in transitioning to the most appropriate longer-term or permanent housing resource available within the community. Alpha Project maintains community engagement and good neighbor practices for the area surrounding the service site with a focus on maintaining a clean and safe environment, along with strategies for building positive relationships with the surrounding community. C-HRT connects clients with appropriate services intended to support them beyond their stay in the shelter. The hours of operation for Family Health Centers of San Diego C-HRT services are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with street outreach hours adjusted to accommodate persons experiencing homelessness. The Alpha Project Harm Reduction Interim Shelter is operational 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

### **C-HRT Safe Haven**

BHS is currently working with the City of San Diego and SDHC to create a Safe Haven to provide transitional housing for clients receiving services through C-HRT. The Safe Haven will provide 22 beds for clients with substance use conditions who are experiencing homelessness in the City of San Diego and supports BHS's harm reduction efforts. Along with the Harm Reduction Interim Shelter, the Safe Haven will house C-HRT clients who are waiting to access available permanent supportive housing resources. The Safe Haven model provides low-barrier housing that is staffed 24/7, creating an environment that respects client dignity and allows clients to focus on achieving their recovery goals.

### **Behavioral Health Support Services (BHSS)**

In January 2021, the BOS approved the competitive solicitation for onsite care coordination services at two (2) new SDHC properties, with a combined total of 330 housing units. After a joint RFP process with SDHC, the contracts were awarded to Telecare Corporation and People Assisting The Homeless (PATH) with contract start dates of 10/27/2021 and 1/1/2022, respectively. The two programs provide behavioral health support services, including outreach, engagement, screening, behavioral health assessment, case management, crisis intervention and linkage to ongoing care as appropriate. The

programs also assist residents to increase housing stability and retention, including leasing up any vacant units. As of May 2022, the programs have provided services to a combined total of 368 residents.

### **Come Play Outside**

In the Summer of 2021, the BOS, HHS, City of San Diego, San Diego Parks Foundation and Price Philanthropies partnered to launch the 'Get Kids Outside' initiative. HHS is contributing funding to support a series of free or low-cost events in over 20 recreation and aquatic centers across South and Central San Diego. Community based programming focused on safely bringing kids and families together at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic limited social interactions and physical activities. As a foundational premise, programming emphasized physical activities and the connection to social emotional health and healthy socialization. The goal for 'Get Kids Outside' in 2021 was to provide a minimum of 80 events, which was achieved. There were over 16,500 participants in the events, though the total count was not of unique individuals as community members were encouraged to attend multiple events.

HHS is continuing the partnership with the City of San Diego and the Parks and Recreation Foundation for the rebranded 'Come Play Outside' programming, formerly known as 'Get Kids Outside'. The 2022 initiative is built on the foundation that physical and social community interactions promote confidence, a sense of responsibility, while building self-image and instilling hope and positive connections. The 'Come Play Outside' initiative expects to offer a minimum of 96 sessions annually with a minimum of 28,800 duplicated participants.

The following is an outline of the general projections for the new 'Come Play Outside' initiative:

- Programming offered at four recreational centers
- 8 Week Curriculum; with 4-hour sessions
- Programming offered on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings
- 24 sessions per location, for a total of 96 sessions
- Estimated attendance of 300 participants per night
- The City of San Diego is leveraging other collaborations to support the events

Additional information on the 'Come Play Outside' initiative can be found at the following links:

- Come Play Outside Home Page - <https://comeplaysd.com/>
- YouTube summary of the program - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Sch4kLnEg8&t=4s>

## **BHS SPECIAL EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **13<sup>th</sup> Annual Early Childhood Mental Health Conference-We Can't Wait!**

CYF in partnership with early childhood stakeholders, will host the 13th Annual Early Childhood Mental Health Conference: *We Can't Wait! - How are the Children? The Path from Healing to Well-Being*. The virtual conference will be held from September 15-16, 2022. Conference presenters will focus on early childhood development, epigenetics, resilience and protective factors in children and families, and will address the unique and complex needs of families living in very challenging circumstances. Distinguished speakers will provide updates on evidence-based practices, trauma-informed care, child welfare services, and advances in early education programs that address improving social-emotional development

Registration is open: <https://www.earlychildhoodmentalhealth-sandiego.com/>

### **Industry Day Screening to Care Initiative Request for Information (RFI) 11881**

CYF invites you to attend the Industry Day virtual session for the Screening to Care Initiative RFI on Thursday, July 28, 2022, from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. The goal of this public meeting is to convene community

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members, stakeholders and potential service providers to share information, discuss best practices, and obtain input on this initiative. This RFI will be administered by the County's HHSA.

Meeting link:

[https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting\\_ZjM1NWQyNjMtMTAyMy00OThjLTk2NWEtOTdmZDNmZTk1OGFj%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%224563af13-c029-41b3-b74c-965e8eec8f96%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%229237eb28-8376-4dfb-bcec-b2fc2524f0e9%22%7d](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_ZjM1NWQyNjMtMTAyMy00OThjLTk2NWEtOTdmZDNmZTk1OGFj%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%224563af13-c029-41b3-b74c-965e8eec8f96%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%229237eb28-8376-4dfb-bcec-b2fc2524f0e9%22%7d)

Call in (audio only): (1 619-343-2539, 640756625# [ID: 640756625#](https://teams.microsoft.com/join/640756625)).

Respectfully submitted,



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