



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

NORA VARGAS
First District

JOEL ANDERSON
Second District

TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Third District

NATHAN FLETCHER
Fourth District

JIM DESMOND
Fifth District

DATE: January 24, 2023

06

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

AUTHORIZE ACCEPTANCE OF FUNDING FOR HOSPITAL AND SKILLED NURSING FACILITY COVID-19 WORKER RETENTION PAYMENT PROGRAM FUNDING, AND ISSUE PAYMENTS TO ELIGIBLE COUNTY EMPLOYEES (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

The San Diego County Board of Supervisors and the County of San Diego (County) Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) remain committed to investing in services, workforce, and the critical infrastructure necessary to meet the needs of vulnerable individuals with behavioral health conditions. In alignment with this commitment, County HHS, Behavioral Health Services is pursuing opportunities to recruit and retain a skilled behavioral health workforce, which has been an ongoing challenge and notably difficult in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been adversely impactful within settings that provide 24-hour health care, including the San Diego County Psychiatric Hospital (SDCPH) and Edgemoor Distinct Part Skilled Nursing Facility (DPSNF). The SDCPH provides 24/7 acute inpatient psychiatric care and emergency psychiatric services, including psychiatric evaluation and crisis intervention treatment, to adults experiencing a mental health crisis to stabilize them and connect them to ongoing care. Edgemoor DPSNF provides 24/7 long-term skilled nursing care for individuals with complex medical needs. Both health care facilities are staffed and operated by highly skilled County employees who support clinical, medical, and administrative activities, and are essential in ensuring the delivery of quality behavioral health care to adults.

In an effort to stabilize and retain the existing health care workforce, the Department of Health Care Services is providing one-time Hospital and Skilled Nursing Facility COVID-19 Worker Retention Payments as a result of *Senate Bill-184 Health, Chapter 47*, signed by Governor Newsom on June 30, 2022, available to eligible staff and physicians that worked within qualifying 24-hour health care facilities, including acute psychiatric hospitals and skilled nursing facilities.

Today's recommended action will authorize the acceptance of the Hospital and Skilled Nursing Facility COVID-19 Worker Retention Payments funding on behalf of County eligible employees within SDCPH and Edgemoor DPSNF who were employed at least part-time during the qualifying work period of July 30, 2022, through October 28, 2022, and disburse the funds to eligible

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employees within 60 days of receipt of the funding from the State. Today's recommended action will also direct the Chief Administrative Officer to engage the appropriate employee organizations to complete the applicable meet and confer process. As the retention payments are fully funded by the State, no amendment to the Compensation Ordinance is necessary.

This item supports the County's vision of a just, sustainable, and resilient future for all, by supporting critical health care workforce that provides essential behavioral health care to individuals in San Diego County that have been historically left behind, as well as our ongoing commitment to the regional *Live Well San Diego* vision of healthy, safe, and thriving communities. This will be done by retaining the critical behavioral health workforce that supports the provision of quality care for underrepresented communities.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Authorize the County of San Diego (County) to accept approximately \$0.8 million of one-time Hospital and Skilled Nursing Facility COVID-19 Worker Retention Payment Program funding and authorize the administration of the disbursement of funding by issuance of one-time payments to County employees within the San Diego County Psychiatric Hospital and Edgemoor Distinct Part Skilled Nursing Facility who meet specified criteria, as outlined in the legislation.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to engage the appropriate employee organizations to complete the applicable meet and confer process.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The vision of the County of San Diego (County) Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Services (BHS) is to build a system in which mental health and substance use services are equitably and regionally distributed, and accessible to all individuals and families within the region who are in need, particularly those vulnerable and traditionally underserved populations. To accomplish this, the County needs a robust and skilled behavioral health workforce, however, there is currently a regional behavioral health worker shortage. According to the San Diego Workforce Partnership workforce report, there are currently 17,000 behavioral health professionals working in San Diego County – 8,000 less than are required to meet current needs. To meet the current and unmet behavioral health needs of the region it is crucial that the County prioritize actions which will retain and support the existing behavioral health workforce.

Today's actions will allow BHS to accept Hospital and Skilled Nursing Facility COVID-19 Worker Retention Payment Program funding from the State to support the preservation of existing workforce within critical facilities, including the San Diego County Psychiatric Hospital and Edgemoor Distinct Part Skilled Nursing Facility. These facilities provide critical behavioral health care to the most vulnerable adults across the region, including individuals who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, to reduce local health disparities.

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SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Today’s actions support the County of San Diego’s (County) Sustainability Goal #2 to provide just and equitable access to County services and appropriate resource allocation with investments focused on chronically underserved communities and Sustainability Goal #4 to protect the health and wellbeing of everyone in the region. The one-time Hospital and Skilled Nursing Facility COVID-19 Worker Retention Payments will provide support to ensure that San Diego County retains a diverse and qualified behavioral health workforce in crucial facilities, including the San Diego County Psychiatric Hospital and Edgemoor Distinct Part Skilled Nursing Facility. These facilities serve individuals with chronic behavioral health conditions, who are historically underserved, and ensure the psychological health and well-being of their clients.

FISCAL IMPACT

Pursuant to the legislation, the County of San Diego is carrying out a State program by serving as a conduit between the State and eligible employees in the administration of the retention payments. Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-24 Operational Plan in the Health and Human Services Agency. If approved, this request will result in estimated costs and restricted, one-time revenues of approximately \$0.8 million in FY 2022-23, which will be covered by existing appropriations, to be directly distributed to employees who are eligible for the retention payments. The funding source is revenue from the Department of Health Care Services for the Hospital and Skilled Nursing Facility COVID-19 Worker Retention Payment Program. There will be no change in net General Fund costs and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

Due to a lack of quorum, the Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB) meeting on January 5, 2023, was canceled and this item was unable to be presented. The item will be presented as an informational item at the February 2, 2023 BHAB meeting.

BACKGROUND

The San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) and the County of San Diego (County), Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) remain committed to investing in services to meet the needs of vulnerable individuals with behavioral health conditions. In alignment with this commitment, County HHS, Behavioral Health Services (BHS) is pursuing opportunities to recruit and retain a skilled behavioral health workforce, which has been an ongoing challenge and notably difficult in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been adversely impactful within settings that provide 24-hour health care, including the San Diego County Psychiatric Hospital (SDCPH) and Edgemoor Distinct Part Skilled Nursing Facility (DPSNF). The SDCPH provides 24/7 acute inpatient psychiatric care and emergency psychiatric services, including psychiatric evaluation and crisis intervention treatment, to adults experiencing a mental health crisis to stabilize them and connect them to ongoing care. Edgemoor DPSNF provides 24/7 long-term skilled nursing care for individuals with complex

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medical needs. Both health care facilities are staffed and operated by highly skilled County employees who support clinical, medical, and administrative activities, and are essential in ensuring the delivery of quality behavioral health care to adults.

In an effort to stabilize and retain the existing health care workforce, the Department of Health Care Services is providing one-time Hospital and Skilled Nursing Facility COVID-19 Worker Retention Payments as a result of *Senate Bill-184 Health. Chapter 47*, signed by Governor Newsom on June 30, 2022, available to eligible staff and physicians that worked within qualifying 24-hour health care facilities, including acute psychiatric hospitals and skilled nursing facilities. The County will accept the COVID-19 worker retention payment program funding on behalf of County eligible employees within SDCPH and Edgemoor DPSNF and administer the payments to the employees who were employed at least part-time during the qualifying work period of July 30, 2022, through October 28, 2022.

As outlined by the legislation, to qualify for the Hospital and Skilled Nursing Facility COVID-19 Worker Retention Payments, employees must meet an array of criteria, including but not limited to the following:

- Employee worked within a “qualifying facility”, meaning, for purposes of the County, an acute psychiatric inpatient hospital (SDCPH) or skilled nursing facility (Edgemoor DPSNF);
- Employee was directly employed by the entity (County) which exercises control over wages, hours or working conditions;
- Employee was employed full time or part time by the entity (County), or is an eligible physician, licensed in California;
- Performed in-person work on the site of a qualifying facility during the qualifying work period; and
- Employee was not a “manager or supervisor” as defined within the legislation.

The Hospital and Skilled Nursing Facility COVID-19 Worker Retention Payments will be available to employees as follows:

- Eligible employees working full time, at least 400 hours in-person during the qualifying work period, will receive up to one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500);
- Eligible employees working part-time, at least 100 hours but less than 400 hours in-person during the qualifying work period, will receive up to one thousand two hundred and fifty dollars (\$1,250) for each eligible part-time employee; and
- Eligible physicians will receive up to one thousand dollars (\$1,000).

Approval of today’s recommended action will authorize the acceptance of the Hospital and Skilled Nursing Facility COVID-19 Worker Retention Payments funding on behalf of County eligible employees within SDCPH and Edgemoor DPSNF and disburse the funds to eligible employees within 60 days of receipt of the funding from the State. The County may not appropriate the funding for any other use and the County will return any undisbursed funds to the State Department of Finance. There is no County funding match requirement associated with accepting and

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administering the hospital and skilled nursing facility COVID-19 worker retention payments. In addition, today's recommended action will also direct the Chief Administrative Officer to engage the appropriate employee organizations to complete the applicable meet and confer process. As the retention payments are fully funded by the State, no amendment to the Compensation Ordinance is necessary.

Approval of this item aligns with the comprehensive strategy to address the regional behavioral health workforce shortage, as outlined approved by the Board on October 11, 2022 (10), by preserving critical behavioral health workforce that provides critical services within Edgemoor and SDCPH.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed actions support the County of San Diego's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan initiatives of Equity (Health) and Community (Quality of Life) as well as the regional *Live Well San Diego* vision, by preserving a skilled and knowledgeable health care workforce to ensure individuals with behavioral health conditions have access to critical care.

Respectfully submitted,



HELEN N. ROBBINS-MEYER
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A