



MONICA MONTGOMERY STEPPE

**SUPERVISOR, FOURTH DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: Tuesday, May 21st, 2024

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TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

ESTABLISHING AN INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO HEALTH FOR ESSENTIAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE AT EAST MEDICAL CAMPUS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

The state of California is facing a mental health crisis and urgent action needs to be taken to help enhance our Behavioral Health continuum of care to best meet the needs of our most vulnerable residents in San Diego County. The state of California is facing a shortfall of approximately 1,971 beds at the acute level, which are necessary to treat patients suffering from severe psychiatric distress. In San Diego County, one in twenty people are currently living with a serious mental illness and that rate increases to one in thirteen people who live in low-income households. Patients enrolled in Medi-Cal face additional barriers to behavioral health treatment, reflecting socioeconomic disparities and increasing the importance of establishing treatment pathways for these vulnerable populations. Today's action presents an opportunity to improve the accessibility and quality of our behavioral health system continuum of care countywide, enhance opportunities for behavioral health providers and support staff to receive world-class education, further bolstering quality of care across the region, as well as establishing additional acute care treatment beds for our most vulnerable populations.

In California, counties are responsible for administering specialty mental health and substance use services to residents eligible for Medi-Cal. To optimize access to care and quality as a health plan, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Services (BHS) is required to maintain a local network of mental health and substance use services and providers that meets the needs of Medi-Cal beneficiaries. In response to identified needs for patients, BHS has sought to rebalance Behavioral Health care systems using a more upstream approach that emphasizes prevention and connects people to the care they need, prioritizing least restrictive settings.

To further align behavioral health services with the needs of the community, the County has an opportunity to establish a partnership with University of California San Diego Health (UCSD

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Health) for critical behavioral health crisis and inpatient services at the East Campus Medical Center (ECMC). Through this partnership, the County would make investments to establish approximately 30-45 new Medi-Cal Managed Care Psychiatric Inpatient Services, along with emergency psychiatric unit (EPU) and crisis stabilization unit (CSU) services at the ECMC.

The inpatient psychiatric setting offers a secure environment where adults can regain their functioning and establish an aftercare plan before transferring to a lower-acuity level of care. Medi-Cal Managed Care Psychiatric Inpatient Services provide inpatient care to adults with severe, acute symptoms of mental illness in need of 24-hour observation and intensive treatment. These services are available to residents who are either Medi-Cal enrolled or eligible countywide and includes diagnosis, care, and treatment of acute episodes. The actions requested will enable an increase in regional capacity with the addition of approximately 30-45 new psychiatric acute inpatient beds for individuals who are Medi-Cal eligible, and that staff will explore how capacity at UCSD East Campus could be leveraged to ensure alignment with community needs into the future.

Additionally, EPU/CSU services will be provided to improve access to critical inpatient and stabilization services for vulnerable adults countywide who are experiencing a behavioral health crisis. EPUs and CSUs provide emergency psychiatric services to stabilize individuals who are experiencing a psychiatric crisis and connect them to ongoing services that meet their individual needs. Services typically last less than 24 hours and include crisis intervention, ongoing assessment and stabilization, medication administration, consultation with family and outpatient providers, and linkage and/or referral to follow-up community-based services and resources. EPU and CSU services reduce unnecessary hospitalizations by diverting individuals from emergency departments and inpatient care, stabilizing them, and connecting them to community-based behavioral health services for ongoing care.

This collaboration will also involve medical oversight and leverage academic leadership from UCSD Health and the UCSD Department of Psychiatry. It will offer an important opportunity to establish a center of academic excellence in Behavioral Health Treatment for the residents of San Diego County. The establishment of such a hub for behavioral health treatment, innovation, and research has the potential to enhance behavioral health access and quality far beyond simply adding to the County acute care bed count. The implementation of services at ECMC will also include clinical leadership and medical oversight within the acute inpatient units at ECMC. This partnership provides an important opportunity to enhance clinical training leading to new opportunities to optimally prepare future Behavioral Health providers to effectively care for the region's most vulnerable people. This clinical training programming will result in vital workforce development for the Behavioral Health system and opportunities for San Diegans to pursue rewarding careers in Behavioral Health as Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners, Social Workers, Pharmacists, Nurses, Healthcare Administrators, and various support staff positions. Such action will result in an influx of high-quality Behavioral Health providers and staff throughout San Diego County, elevating the quality of care across the region.

The passing of Proposition 1, the Behavioral Health Services Act, presents a significant opportunity for one-time investments in dedicated infrastructure that will enhance our behavioral health system for many decades. Proposition 1 reconfigured the Mental Health Services Act and

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approved \$6.4 billion in bonds to build an estimated 11,150 new units including a combination of dedicated behavioral health treatment beds and supportive housing. Establishing a partnership with the ECMC at UCSD Health to establish more dedicated Medi-Cal Managed Care Inpatient Acute Psychiatric Services and EPU/CSU services puts the County in an ideal position to pursue one-time infrastructure funding under Proposition 1.

Today's action requests the Board find that the proposed program is necessary to meet the social needs of the County's population. In addition, today's action requests the Board authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, or designee, to enter into negotiations with UC San Diego Health for Medi-Cal Managed Care inpatient acute psychiatric services, Emergency Psychiatric Unit, and Crisis Stabilization Services, and return to the San Diego County Board of Supervisors with an update within 120 days to seek further authority to execute an agreement and establish appropriations, as needed.

This item supports the County's vision of a just, sustainable, and resilient future for all, specifically communities and populations in San Diego County that have been historically left behind. This item also supports our ongoing commitment to the regional *Live Well San Diego* vision of healthy, safe, and thriving communities. It will advance the behavioral health continuum of care by supporting better access to care for individuals, better health for local populations, and more efficient health care resourcing in alignment with the Board's Framework for Our Future priorities.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

SUPERVISOR MONICA MONTGOMERY STEPPE

1. Pursuant to California Government Code section 26227, find that the proposed program is necessary to meet the social needs of the County's population.
2. Authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, or designee, to enter into negotiations with UC San Diego Health for Medi-Cal Managed Care inpatient acute psychiatric services, emergency psychiatric, and crisis stabilization services and return to the San Diego County Board of Supervisors with an update within 120 days to seek further authority to execute an agreement and establish appropriations, as needed.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

BHS functions as the specialty mental health plan for Medi-Cal eligible residents within San Diego County with serious mental illness as well as the service delivery system for Medi-Cal eligible residents with substance use disorder care needs. Medi-Cal patients have long experienced health inequities spanning all aspects of healthcare from access to outcomes. Patients enrolled in Medi-Cal face more barriers to accessing care, receive lower quality care, and ultimately experience worse health outcomes than patients enrolled in Medicare or private insurance plans. These negative sequelae are felt most intensely by the black community and other communities of color throughout the County. As a regional steward of public health, BHS must ensure that services address the social determinants of health by being accessible, equitably distributed, capable of meeting the needs of a diverse population, and prioritizing communities most in need.

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If approved, today's action is an important step in increasing capacity of inpatient acute psychiatric services along with emergency psychiatric unit (EPU) and crisis stabilization unit (CSU) services at ECMC for Medi-Cal eligible adults countywide through collaboration with UCSD Health.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The adoption of this recommendation, finding that the proposed program is necessary to meet the social needs of the County's population and authorizing the Chief Administrative Officer, or designee, to enter into negotiations with UC San Diego Health for Medi-Cal Managed Care inpatient acute psychiatric services, emergency psychiatric, and crisis stabilization services will enhance the health and social wellbeing of San Diego County residents. In establishing these services, the County of San Diego will improve access to critical behavioral health inpatient and crisis care for vulnerable adults, improve overall health for local populations, and establish more efficient health care resourcing.

FISCAL IMPACT

There are no immediate fiscal impacts associated with today's item. There would be future fiscal impacts to establish additional capacity for psychiatric services which would depend on outcomes of negotiations with UC San Diego Health. Any recommendations resulting from negotiations would be brought back to the Board for approval and funding. At this time, there will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

The state of California is facing a mental health crises and urgent action needs to be taken to help enhance our Behavioral Health continuum of care to best meet the needs of our most vulnerable residents in San Diego County. The state of California is facing a shortfall of approximately 1,971 beds at the acute level, which are necessary to treat patients suffering from severe psychiatric distress. In San Diego County, one in twenty San Diegans are currently living with a serious mental illness and that rate increases to one in thirteen San Diegans who live in low-income households. Patients enrolled in Medi-Cal face additional barriers to behavioral health treatment, reflecting socioeconomic disparities and increasing the importance of establishing treatment pathways for these vulnerable populations. Furthermore, recent changes to State involuntary behavioral healthcare policy, with Senate Bill 43, will increase pressure on the county's inpatient psychiatric care capacity.

Today's action presents an opportunity to improve the accessibility and quality of our behavioral health system continuum of care countywide, enhance opportunities for behavioral health providers and support staff to receive world-class education further bolstering quality of care across the region, as well as establishing additional acute care treatment beds for our most vulnerable populations.

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In California, counties are responsible for administering specialty mental health and substance use services to residents eligible for Medi-Cal. To optimize access to care and quality as a health plan, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Services (BHS) is required to maintain a local network of mental health and substance use services and providers that meets the needs of Medi-Cal beneficiaries. In response to identified needs for patients, BHS has sought to rebalance Behavioral Health care systems using a more upstream approach that emphasizes prevention and connects people to the care they need, prioritizing least restrictive settings.

To further align behavioral health services with the needs of the community, the County has an opportunity to establish a partnership with University of California San Diego Health (UCSD Health) for critical behavioral health crisis and inpatient services at the East Campus Medical Center (ECMC). Through this partnership, the County would establish new Medi-Cal Managed Care Psychiatric inpatient services, along with emergency psychiatric unit (EPU) and crisis stabilization unit (CSU) services at the ECMC.

The inpatient psychiatric setting offers a secure environment where adults can regain their functioning and establish an aftercare plan before transferring to a lower-acuity level of care. Medi-Cal Managed Care Psychiatric Inpatient Services provide inpatient care to adults with severe, acute symptoms of mental illness in need of 24-hour observation and intensive treatment. These services are available to residents who are either Medi-Cal enrolled or eligible countywide and includes diagnosis, care, and treatment of acute episodes. Acute inpatient psychiatric care is a critical component of the overall continuum of behavioral health services. Establishing this partnership with UCSD Health offers a valuable, timely opportunity to advance the behavioral health continuum of care.

EPU and CSU services provide emergency psychiatric services to stabilize individuals who are experiencing a psychiatric crisis and connect them to ongoing services that meet their individual needs. Services typically last less than 24 hours and include crisis intervention, ongoing assessment and stabilization, medication administration, consultation with family and outpatient providers, and linkage and/or referral to follow-up community-based services and resources. EPU and CSU services reduce unnecessary hospitalizations by diverting individuals from emergency departments and inpatient care, stabilizing them, and connecting them to community-based behavioral health services for ongoing care.

The new EPU/CSU within ECMC will improve access to behavioral health services, enhance the quality of care, and provide more effective care coordination aligned with upstream prevention and continuous care, and is expected to result in the following outcomes:

- reductions in emergency department admissions,
- reductions in discharges to inpatient care,
- increased connection of individuals discharged from the EPU/CSU to family, community resources, and other support systems to strengthen engagement and maintain stability,
- enhanced care coordination, including connections to ongoing, community-based care and follow-up, to ensure individuals remain connected to treatment,

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- reductions in the rates of inpatient and EPU/CSU readmissions,
- increased enrollment of eligible individuals to Medi-Cal, and
- reductions in much more expensive inpatient hospitalizations.

The partnership with UCSD has the potential to significantly expedite the timeline for launching behavioral health care at ECMC by repurposing existing facilities. Completion of these facility improvements will establish new acute inpatient bed capacity and a new EPU/CSU adjacent to the East region of San Diego County expanding services to this highly dense Medi-Cal population. It will also ensure improved access for patients by allowing them to receive treatment in close proximity to where they reside instead of being transported to other areas of the county.

This unique opportunity to collaborate with UCSD Health to add new capacity at ECMC builds upon previous Board actions to partner with UCSD and will enhance the behavioral health continuum of care by increasing the number of dedicated Medi-Cal acute inpatient psychiatric beds and EPU/CSU services and aligns with the principles of ongoing behavioral health continuum work across the region.

Advancing these collaborative efforts can result in an increase in the capacity of regional acute inpatient services for individuals who are Medi-Cal eligible and establish new crisis services, improving access to critical behavioral health inpatient and crisis care for vulnerable adults countywide. Psychiatric Inpatient Services and CSU/EPU services offered at ECMC, a General Acute Care Hospital, will be Medi-Cal billable allowing for the drawdown federal funding to optimize revenues.

This partnership with UCSD will also offer an important opportunity to establish a center of academic excellence in Behavioral Health Treatment for the residents of San Diego County. The establishment of such a hub for behavioral health treatment, innovation, and research has the potential to enhance behavioral health access and quality far beyond simply adding to the County acute care bed count. The implementation of services at ECMC will also include clinical leadership and medical oversight within the acute inpatient units at ECMC. This partnership provides an important opportunity to enhance clinical training leading to new opportunities to optimally prepare future Behavioral Health providers to effectively care for the region's most vulnerable people. This clinical training programming will also result in vital workforce development for the Behavioral Health system and opportunities for San Diegans to pursue rewarding careers in Behavioral Health as Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners, Social Workers, Pharmacists, Nurses, Healthcare Administrators, and various support staff positions. Such action will result in an influx of high-quality Behavioral Health providers and staff throughout San Diego County, elevating the quality of care across the region.

Opportunities Under Proposition 1

Proposition 1 is a two-part measure, that will amend the California Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) and create a \$6.38 billion general obligation bond. On April 9, 2024 (4), the Board took action on an item brought forward by Chairwoman Nora Vargas, directing staff to create a process for seeking and investing Proposition 1 bond funding, informed by data; community advocates; and stakeholders, and return to the board within 120 days with a set of priorities to inform County

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planning efforts in areas such as mental health, substance abuse and housing services that would be eligible for these funds.

The passage of Proposition 1 presents an opportunity to make investments in dedicated infrastructure that will impact our behavioral health system for decades to come. The Behavioral Health Services Act reconfigures the existing Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) and will result in a 5 percent overall funding reduction to the County. Proposition 1 will also expand the flexibility to utilize BHS funds for services that support people with substance use conditions, a strong emphasis on housing and housing interventions for individuals who are experiencing homelessness, and much more substantial requirements around data and health outcome reporting, including all funding and services within the behavioral health continuum of care.

Proposition 1 also approved \$6.4 billion in bonds to build an estimated 11,150 new dedicated behavioral health treatment beds and supportive housing units. Further breakdown of funds include:

- \$2.9 billion for grants for behavioral health treatment and residential settings
- \$1.5 billion for counties, cities, and tribal entities for grants treatment and residential settings.
- \$1.1 billion for housing veterans at risk of homelessness with BHS needs.
- \$0.9 billion for others at risk of homeless with BH needs.

Guidance regarding implementation will be issued by the State by July 1, 2025. Within the behavioral health treatment and residential settings, the infrastructure funding will establish new dedicated capacity across the continuum of care, including:

- Short-Term Crisis Stabilization
- Acute and Subacute care
- Crisis Residential
- Recovery housing
- Substance Use Disorder Residential
- Short-term Residential Therapeutic Programs
- Social Rehabilitation Programs
- Community-Based Mental Health Residential
- Peer Respite
- Outpatient Services
- Other clinically enriched longer-term treatment and rehabilitation services.

Establishing a partnership with the ECMC at UCSD Health to explore establishing dedicated Medi-Cal Managed Care Inpatient Acute Psychiatric Services and EPU/CSU services situates the County ideally with a potential opportunity to pursue one-time infrastructure funding under Proposition 1.

Today's action requests the Board find that the proposed program is necessary to meet the social needs of the County's population. In addition, today's action requests the Board authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, or designee, to enter into negotiations with UC San Diego Health

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for Medi-Cal Managed Care inpatient acute psychiatric services, emergency psychiatric unit, and crisis stabilization services, and return to the San Diego County Board of Supervisors with an update within 120 days to seek further authority to execute an agreement and establish appropriations, as needed.

These actions will advance the County ongoing work across systems to support better care of individuals, better health for local populations, and more efficient health care resourcing in alignment with the Board's Framework for Our Future priorities, while maintaining prudent fiscal management of the County's resources. In doing so, today's item supports our ongoing commitment to the regional *Live Well San Diego* vision of healthy, safe, and thriving communities.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed actions support the County of San Diego's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan Initiatives of Equity (Health) and Community (Quality of Life) as well as the regional *Live Well San Diego* vision, by reducing disparities and disproportionality of individuals with mental illness and substance use disorders and ensuring access to a comprehensive continuum of behavioral health services administered through accessible behavioral health programs and providing programs and services that enhance the community through increasing the well-being of residents and local environments.

Respectfully submitted,



MONICA MONTGOMERY STEPPE
Supervisor, Fourth District

ATTACHMENT(S)

None