



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD

2019 Annual Report

County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency



County of San Diego Board of Supervisors



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Dr. Luke Bergmann
Director
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A Message from the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency

The County of San Diego Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB) has, with commitment and innovation from its unique members, continued its dual role of providing input to the San Diego County Board of Supervisors and the Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), Behavioral Health Services (BHS) administration throughout 2019. As the County advances the *Live Well San Diego* vision, it is our duty to ensure the voices of consumers and experts from the community are involved as we plan and enhance our service delivery to citizens of San Diego. We are proud to have a robust and engaged community network, of which BHAB plays a fundamental role.

The overall goals of BHAB for San Diego County very closely reflect the *Live Well San Diego* vision for a region that is building better health, living safely and thriving. Through the board's advocacy of equity in primary care and behavioral health services, **better health** is achieved. The work each member does to elevate service priorities for substance abuse prevention and homeless individuals with mental health challenges supports personal **safety**, as well as the safety of the community. Adding this to the board's advocacy for addressing crucial behavioral health needs, it allows individuals in San Diego County to **thrive** and participate in other opportunities in the community.

In the past, the efforts of BHAB workgroups have resulted in several recommendations which have helped guide community planning work for BHS, especially in preventative and collaboration efforts. Feedback on care coordination and building a better functioning BHAB was instrumental as the County of San Diego worked with providers, citizens, and stakeholders to produce comprehensive dialogue on specific issues and begin expanding services countywide.

As we prepare for 2020, it is important that we continue to collaborate with one another in hopes of achieving a collective impact to increase the quality of life for our citizens. Many issues will be brought to BHAB for consideration, analysis, input and support as HHSA continues to develop and grow. We rely on the members of BHAB to provide expertise, guidance, and wisdom to achieve meaningful accomplishments for our great County. Together, we will continue to build a better system for those needing behavioral health services and for the community as a whole. We thank you for submitting this report detailing the work of BHAB in 2019.

With gratitude,



Dean Arabatzis
Acting Agency Director,
County of San Diego Health
and Human Services Agency



Dr. Luke Bergmann
Director, County of San Diego
Health and Human Services Agency
Behavioral Health Services



What is the Behavioral Health Advisory Board?

On December 2, 2014, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors established the County of San Diego Behavioral Health Advisory Board. Per California statute, each County Behavioral Health Advisory Board has the responsibility to:

1. Review community mental health needs, services, facilities and special problems
2. Serve in an advisory capacity to local governing bodies and Behavioral Health Directors

Purpose Statement:

The purpose of the County of San Diego Behavioral Health Advisory Board is to review and evaluate the community's behavioral health needs, services, programs, facilities, and procedures used to ensure citizen and professional involvement in the planning process.



BHAB conducts meetings at the County of San Diego Administration Center, shown above.



Message from Chair Jen Mendel:

Just a few thoughts to share on the past year. First, it has been an honor and an amazing experience to have been the Chair for this year. Our Board is made up of 20 highly invested individuals working together to assist our County Supervisors in development and implementation of some of the best programs to support our population with mental health treatment as well as alcohol and drug treatment under the Drug Medi-Cal program. We had three dedicated workgroups this year addressing the Continuum of Care, How to Build a Better BHAB, and Homelessness.

All three of these subjects are large challenges to take on, and I am very pleased to say that what these workgroups produced as recommendations was on point. Another highlight this year was the Live Well Summit held on October 28. The Summit provided instruction and insight to more than 300 participants. It was a well-organized and amazing day. Our Prescription Drug, Meth Strikeforce and Marijuana Initiative have all done tremendous work for our County. Please take time to review their work on our website. Dr. Wooten and her team have taken on the Hep C crisis and are putting together a well-thought-out strategy to address this epidemic. Congratulations to her and her team. We look forward to the results of their efforts.



Behavioral Health Advisory Board's 2019 Year in Review

The County of San Diego BHAB holds regular public meetings on the first Thursday of each month. Any interested individual is encouraged to attend these public meetings. In 2019, the members of BHAB actively reviewed and evaluated the community's behavioral health needs,



services, programs, facilities, and procedures. BHAB provided input and guidance on 14 items related to local behavioral health prior to these items being considered by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board). BHAB members approved a total of 18 action items, including Board items and other internal BHAB business.

During the monthly meetings, educational presentations by experts in the community inform BHAB of services and data in the community. The board then gets the opportunity to engage these professionals in dialogue. BHAB received 20 presentations from technical experts in the behavioral health field on a variety of issues affecting the community and greater region. These enriching presentations help broaden board members' understanding and perspective, enabling them to more fully represent the needs and interests of the region.



Behavioral Health Advisory Board Accomplishments by Month

JANUARY

The year began with a presentation on Whole Person Wellness, by Clinical Director Dr. Michael Krelstein. The program is designed to coordinate physical health, behavioral health, and social services, with the goal of improving overall health outcomes. The idea of care coordination was very crucial to BHAB this year, and the members of the board were given the opportunity to ask questions about the program to ensure it promotes the continuum of care across the spectrum of behavioral health through collaboration with County departments and external partners. Another top priority for the board was homelessness. Members were given a presentation on Home Finder, a contracted program which assists eligible outpatient BHS clients with rent until they become employed or get approved for benefits.

FEBRUARY

Then in February, the board received an update on the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System from Dr. Nicole Esposito, the assistant Clinical Director for BHS. This system helps connect those needing substance use disorder treatment with services and improves coordination between providers. Additionally, Angela Rowe, the chair of the Alcohol and Drug Services Providers Association, came to the board to discuss providers who are facing challenges with technical assistance. The board then questioned Dr. Esposito about these concerns, and she explained that additional technical training sessions have been added. This is an example of how the board works with staff to ensure that provider and client needs are acknowledged and met.

MARCH

BHAB is tasked to approve action items, and during March the board approved three items. For example, in the previous meeting our board was introduced to The Data Notebook (Notebook), which is developed by the California Behavioral Health Planning Council, and is a mechanism for reviewing information and reporting on specific mental health services. With a motion by Phil Deming, seconded by Bill Stewart, and 15 additional “ayes” from the board, the Notebook was formally approved. The Notebook represents a fulfilment of our duties to the State, under the Welfare and Institutions Code governing the responsibilities of mental health boards.

APRIL

At the beginning of every BHAB meeting there is an opportunity for public comment, which gives the community a chance to formally communicate with the board and share ideas for consideration. In April, a citizen addressed the board and expressed their suggestion regarding services for the blind. The board also heard from Rachel Solov, the Chief of Criminal Justice and Mental Health Reform Strategies for the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office. She discussed key areas of interest in criminal justice such as improvements to mental health



prevention and intervention, better acute crisis response, stabilization management, and data outcomes.

MAY There was a presentation in May regarding a serious public health threat, tobacco control and vaping, given by Community Health Program Specialist, Irene Linayao-Putman, who shared information on the negative health effects of vaping and highlighted the gravity of e-cigarette use. Also, Andrew Pease, the Executive Finance Director of HHSA, presented the recommended Operational Plan which covered the economics of HHSA funding for services. Mr. Pease went over the recommended budget, staffing changes, service enhancements, and forecasts. BHS, the largest department in HHSA, had the greatest increase in funds in the recommended budget of any department over the previous year, adding an additional \$50.3M for a total of \$708.5M. This additional funding is being directly invested toward the vision for our Continuum of Care, including: prevention, inpatient care, Psychiatric Emergency Response Team, crisis stabilization, regional hubs, additional beds, and the workforce.

Another significant focus area for our county has been the opioid crisis. In **JUNE**, Dr. Nicole Esposito presented a strategic plan to reduce opioid and prescription drug misuse. The discussion included strategies like broadening the focus to all opioids, and opioid stewardship in healthcare.



BHAB 2019 Executive Committee: (L to R) Rick McGaffigan, William Stewart, Jenifer Mendel (Chair); Michael Matthews, and John Sturm.



AUGUST The board met again in August to discuss and receive updates on the first year of the implemented Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS). Because this program impacts a significant population, we requested several updates from the consumers and providers. Angela Rowe served as the voice of the provider and updated the board on the progress including increased care coordination, an uptick in client admission, and more collaboration between providers. The presentation also included an informative video of a Medication Assisted Treatment client discussing her personal story and explaining how DMC-ODS saved her life.

In the month of **SEPTEMBER**, the board received an informative and detailed presentation on the Mental Health Services Act by BHS Program Coordinator Nadia Privara. This act allocates funding for services such as prevention and early intervention, innovation, workforce training, capital facility needs, and community services. The budget for the upcoming year has grown to \$214.5 million, and BHAB was pleased to participate in the 30-day comment period and submit feedback for BHS to include in their final report to the State.

OCTOBER One of the most impactful duties the board undertakes is the twice-annual review of BHS procurements, in the form of the BHS Omnibus Board Letter. This letter serves as the vehicle to provide authority and program design for an array of mental health and substance use disorder programs. The board heard about the many life-changing services and programs contained in this letter, and voted to support the approvals and authorizations contained within. The board also devoted time to discuss internal logistics such as elections for the next year, and held a retreat to discuss bylaws, prioritize top concerns, and set priorities for the upcoming year.

In **NOVEMBER** the board adopted their 2020 priorities as the Continuum of Care, and Building a Better BHAB. The board also received a presentation on the individuals living with homelessness in the San Diego region from Omar Passons, HHSA Director of Integrative Services. He highlighted that integrative services such as intensive outreach and engagement, system navigation, and housing assistance are needed to combat homelessness. The board also heard from the CEO of the Regional Task Force on the Homeless, Tamera Kohler. She reviewed strategies to combat homelessness and pathways to address the issue.



To close out the year, the board got their final presentation in **DECEMBER** on Hepatitis C in San Diego, by Dr. Christian Ramers, Medical Director of Family Health Centers of San Diego. The board listened to facts regarding the disease and risk management methodologies. The presentation highlighted strategies meant to lower the rates of Hepatitis C in San Diego and increase awareness of the disease as a major public health concern, disease screenings for the public, and support for Hepatitis C virus research.



Back row (left to right): Che Hernandez, Richard McGaffigan, Jerry Hall, Joel San Juan, Edward Weiner, Phillip Deming, Michael Grattan.

Front row (left to right): John Sturm, Judith Yates, Jenifer Mendel, Dr. Luke Bergman, Michael Matthews.



A deeper look: Continuum of Care

To address a potentially significant loss of future services for people in psychiatric crisis, resulting from inpatient behavioral health units closing at local hospitals, on July 24, 2018, Supervisor Kristin Gaspar initiated a Board conference to present a comprehensive assessment of the state of inpatient psychiatric care in San Diego County and provide immediate and long-term recommendations.

In response to this request, the County of San Diego HHSA convened a Board conference in October 2018 that allowed panelists across multiple sectors to describe specific challenges, responses, and opportunities to optimize care for people with serious psychiatric needs. Overall, it was deemed that strengthening the full continuum of behavioral health care services through regional collaboration would yield the best collective results for the people who use those services.

In order to achieve this goal, the Board of Supervisors directed the Chief Administrative Officer Helen Robbins-Meyer to contract a consulting group to help develop, implement, and evaluate cross-sector services and governance structure. In March 2019, Public Consulting Group (PCG) was awarded the contract and directed to provide updates to the board on any new developments. As the year progressed, HHSA and PCG engaged in weekly meetings with service providers in the County to request immediate action with expansions of specific services as well as updates on the status of collaboration efforts to achieve a continuum of care.

BHAB took action on this topic by kicking off 2019 with the creation of a Continuum of Care Workgroup (Workgroup). The purpose of the Workgroup is to create further dialogue on services available to those needing behavioral health care in San Diego, and to brainstorm designs that integrate care and culturally responsive services which are able to cut across the many sectors of healthcare access currently in place. Through the Workgroup members agreed on recommendations that were made public throughout the year.



A deeper look: Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System

To address the current opioid crisis and other substance abuse issues, the County of San Diego implemented the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS) in July 2018. Since then, BHAB has been working to ensure a smooth execution by receiving quarterly updates on progress.

The enhanced system is specifically designed to serve low-income San Diegans and will address the systemic damage that substance abuse inflicts on people, families, and communities. It allows the County to tap into more federal Medicaid funds, significantly enhance services, and expand the provider network to increase the number of clients served.

In this year of implementation, efforts are being made to achieve full-system capacity by maximizing the outreach to individuals in need of treatment, enhancing the infrastructure needed to support the delivery of services, and engaging qualified service providers to ensure a robust provider network is available across San Diego County.

The board received two updates this year that assessed the progress of clients and the services provided to them, as well as a provider perspective to ensure the program is functioning properly. The overall sentiment is that the new system is gaining traction; for example, more clients are receiving services, many programs have become certified, and there is increased collaboration between providers. Providers of these services were initially having trouble with billing, documentation, and some workforce development challenges. Overall it was determined that the County is on the right track for implementation and responsive to provider concerns.



Looking Forward: Behavioral Health Advisory Board 2020 Priorities

On October 19th, 2019, the Behavioral Health Advisory Board held a Fall Retreat where each BHAB member debated potential priorities for the upcoming year in 2020. The board then voted to establish the following two priorities for 2020:

2020 Priorities

- **Continuum of Care** – Collaborate with County departments, service providers and *Live Well San Diego* partners to improve care coordination and strengthen the continuum of care across the spectrum of behavioral health by identifying challenges and gaps that hinder client access to services.
- **Building a Better BHAB** - Focus on increasing BHAB member knowledge of the outcomes, budget, and funding for Behavioral Health Services. Participate in strategy and planning processes and analyze behavioral health data.



In Our Own Words: *What Do These Workgroups Mean to You?*

Housing and Homelessness Workgroup (HHWG)

“The year 2019 was very challenging for our BHAB Housing and Homelessness Workgroup, yet there were some encouraging developments. For instance, we met with the Monarch School and San Pasqual Academy. They continue to make headway in tackling youth homelessness, and they are open to working with us in pursuit of our common goals. We also met with the BHS staff that oversees the County-funded program called ‘Our Safe Place,’ which offers services to vulnerable youths in addressing their hierarchy of needs. HHWG will explore how these services may be expanded, replicated and developed further to prevent homelessness among all youth and even adults.

HHWG has identified several other programs that can be replicated and expanded in dealing with homelessness. These include the homelessness Diversion and Prevention training programs started by the Regional Task Force on the Homeless in March 2019. Other projects that we have examined and find encouraging include Connections Housing at 1250 Sixth Avenue in downtown San Diego. There are various other homelessness programs that offer Housing First and Permanent Supportive Housing such as Father Joe’s Villages. Research by HHWG indicates that the programs mentioned here offer models that may be replicated and developed further and would be very effective in reducing, ending and preventing homelessness in San Diego County.”

Submitted by Joel San Juan, HHWG Chair

Continuum of Care Workgroup

“The Continuum of Care Workgroup began in 2019 with an ambitious goal and started by working to ensure all members had a shared understanding of the current continuum of care, and the many definitions used in discussing this work. Being able to work from a point of common understanding allowed our group to articulate a vision of where we feel the County and region should be heading in this body of work. Then, we began to review information the group gathered from other jurisdictions far and wide. Some of the models and program designs were worthy of further consideration, and others were further afield. Additionally, the group met with Clinical Director Michael Krelstein and other senior County leaders to pose questions and gain more insight into current efforts and what could be learned from others. Our fall retreat was the venue for sharing workgroup recommendations with the full BHAB group. This important work and this workgroup will be ongoing as we continue into 2020 and undertake more planning for service delivery and program design of Behavioral Health Services, focused on prevention and early intervention, community-based crisis services, and sub-acute and long-term care.”

Submitted by Judith Yates, COC Chair



Building a Better BHAB Workgroup

“The Building a Better BHAB (BBB) workgroup was formed to better align the county Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB) work in practice with the focus and responsibilities outlined in California’s Welfare and Institution Code (WIC). A new legislative act AB1352 was signed by the governor and will help us align our focus during 2020. Ultimately, our intent is to be more effective engaging the wide spectrum of community so that we may better inform Supervisors, so that we can meet our *Live Well San Diego* vision, especially focused on San Diegans with mental health and alcohol and other drug challenges, in Building Better Health, Living Safely and Thriving.

In 2019, we focused on information-gathering, including meeting with our new Director of Behavioral Health Services, Dr. Luke Bergmann, and the Chief of Quality Improvement, Tabatha Lang. Workgroup members also held candid discussions with various County staff, service-provider staff, and community members. We also attended the California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards and Commissions (CALBHBC) training seminars and shared challenges, successes, and best practices with our peer mental health boards from around California.

The BBB workgroup identified specific focus areas during 2020 including: 1) focusing on aligning BHAB work with BHS, HHSA, and Supervisor’s goals, policies and practices, being guided by better use of current and future data; 2) refocusing BHAB to engage the greater BHS system and other stakeholders to meet our WIC obligations, especially developing systems giving community of stakeholders’ opportunities to participate collaboratively throughout the year, and; 3) reshaping the content of monthly BHAB meetings to ensure we are focused on where we can be most effective, and ensuring presentations include opportunities for participants to engage effectively. We welcome community participation in this work!”

Submitted by Jerry Hall, BBB Chair



*Members of the Building
Better BHAB
Workgroup met with
Tabatha Lang, Assistant
Medical Services
Administrator.*



For questions, please contact Natalya Serrano at Natalya.Serrano@sdcounty.ca.gov.

