



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 – FEBRUARY 2022

ADVANCING EQUITY THROUGH POPULATION HEALTH INITIATIVES

Population Health Framework

Population health is defined as “the health outcomes of a group of individuals, including the distribution of such outcomes within the group”; this includes health outcomes and patterns of health determinants, as well as the policies and interventions that link them.¹ Population health is fundamentally aligned with public health, the aim of which is to prevent disease, prolong life, and promote health.² Importantly, a population health framework is crucial to achieving health equity because it enables an understanding of how and why health outcomes vary across different groups (e.g., by geography, race/ethnicity, age, etc.); this information can be used to develop data-driven, community-informed, actionable steps to reduce disparities.

Historically, behavioral health has primarily focused on the provision of clinical services to individuals who have a clinical diagnosis,³ and has typically been siloed from public health and health care sectors. In addition, systems and program planning have often been driven by crises versus chronic care and prevention. Applying a population health framework to behavioral health can help address these limitations by facilitating: a larger population reach; incorporation of prevention measures; early intervention and harm reduction efforts (in addition to clinical interventions for individuals with established diagnoses); enhanced coordination and integration with other relevant sectors; the ability to meet the diverse behavioral health needs of the community; and promotion of equitable outcomes. Above all, the goal of using a population health lens in this context is optimal behavioral health and wellness across the continuum of need.³

Population Health Unit

BHS supports a population health approach to behavioral health and is currently undergoing a transformation from a more traditional model of behavioral health to one rooted in population health principles. To advance this vision, BHS recently established the Population Health Unit. Fundamental

¹ Kindig D, Stoddart G. “What is population health?” American Journal of Public Health. 2003. 93(3):380-383.

² Acheson, E. D. (1988). On the state of the public health [the fourth Duncan lecture]. Public Health, 102(5), 431–437.

³ Evans AC, Bufka LF. The Critical Need for a Population Health Approach: Addressing the Nation’s Behavioral Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond. Prevention Chronic Disease 2020;17:200261. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd17.200261>.

to this unit's work will be streamlining behavioral health data sources and analytics to provide a comprehensive view of the county's behavioral health needs, strengths, outcomes, and disparities. Furthermore, robust behavioral health data will allow for development and implementation of innovative programs and policies based on identified trends and needs. This data can also be used to monitor and evaluate the impact of interventions, as well as to provide critical information back to the community. The Population Health Unit, in concert with BHS as a whole, will strive to use this data-driven approach to improve behavioral health services and increase health equity in San Diego County.

Community Experience Project (CEP)

An illustrative example of the population health approach is BHS's recently launched initiative to promote behavioral health equity through the Community Experience Project (CEP). The CEP aims to identify unmet behavioral health needs and to address their underlying systemic and regional inequities. The CEP will work collaboratively with communities to understand and reduce health disparities, and to guide and inform culturally responsive program development. The final product will promote a continuous feedback process through which disparities can be identified, further informed by community engagement and mediated by actionable plans.

The first phase of the CEP, completed in Fall 2021, is the development of an interactive dashboard that will allow users to investigate behavioral health equity data by subpopulation (e.g., race/ethnicity, age, sexual and gender identity) and geographic area. This interactive dashboard is currently being utilized by BHS Leadership for planning purposes. BHS is actively working on implementing the dashboard for community access. For more information, please view the following videos: Part I: <https://youtu.be/A6IBVP8bNf4> and Part II: <https://youtu.be/7ZOXoniW8ro>.

A subsequent phase of the CEP is development of a Behavioral Health Equity Index (BHEI) to help highlight populations and neighborhoods at greatest risk for unmet behavioral health needs. Community members and key stakeholders will be engaged in the identification, collection, analysis, and interpretation of data via focus groups, emailed surveys, and other means. Next steps include selection of indicators and generating the index, including weighting assignments for component indicators.

The Community Experience Committee (CEC) will be implemented in phases to support the development of the BHEI. Phase I of the CEC will include peers, family members, individuals with expertise in prevention, evaluation, and epidemiology, as well as representatives from the Cultural Competency Resource Team; Phase I will inform the design of a community-wide behavioral health survey. Phase II will include adding community and stakeholder representation and will support survey engagement efforts. The University of California, San Diego Research Centers will provide support and expertise throughout all phases of the CEC and will be responsible for data analysis and final creation of the BHEI.

The CEP is one example of putting a population health approach into action. The Population Health Unit at BHS looks forward to sharing more of this emerging body of work in the future.

Behavioral Health Special Events and Announcements

Community Harm Reduction Team (C-HRT)

Family Health Centers of San Diego Community Harm Reduction Team (C-HRT) implemented street outreach in December 2021 through coordinated effort with the City of San Diego and Alpha Project for designated shelter services. C-HRT provides outreach in the East Village and Midway areas to engage and connect with individuals with substance use disorders and co-occurring disorders who are also experiencing homelessness.

Behavioral Health Support Services (BHSS)

BHS partnered with San Diego Housing Commission on a joint Request for Proposal (RFP) for Behavioral Health Support Services (BHSS) at two San Diego Housing Properties last Fall. The RFP resulted in two (2) contracts with Telecare Corporation BHSS services at the Kearny Vista (142 units) property; and People Assisting The Homeless (PATH) providing BHSS services at the Valley Vista (190 units) property. Residents will be screened by the BHSS providers and linked to ongoing BHS and ancillary services.

Tri-City Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF) Public Meetings

The County of San Diego (County) and Tri-City Medical Center are partnering to build a modern, state of the art facility on the Tri-City campus in Oceanside to provide essential mental health services to the North San Diego County community. The County is hosting two virtual community engagement forums to provide the community with information and answer questions regarding the facility. The public meetings will be conducted as a two-part series with follow-up information provided at the second meeting. Each meeting will be approximately one hour. Community members are welcome to attend both but may also choose to attend just one meeting. More information can be found at the following link: www.sandiegocounty.gov/TriCityPHF

2nd Annual Birth of Brilliance Virtual Conference and Cultural Fair

The 2nd Annual Birth of Brilliance virtual conference is scheduled for February 24, 2022. The focus of this conference is to raise awareness about the effects of racial disparities and implicit bias in mental health, social services, developmental services, education, medical care, and juvenile justice, to serve youth and families in a way that centers equity to amplify the brilliance of all children. Registration is now open at: [Birth of Brilliance Virtual Conference 2022](#)

Additionally, the Birth of Brilliance conference team in collaboration with the County of San Diego Office of Equity & Racial Justice will host a Cultural Fair on February 25, 2022, 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. Registration for the Cultural Fair can be found at: [Birth of Brilliance Virtual Conference 2022](#)

7th Annual Critical Issues in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Conference

The 7th Annual Critical Issues in Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CICAMH)-Managing Change in a Changing World conference is scheduled for March 11, 2022. The focus of this conference is to raise awareness of the most current and relevant issues facing youth today. The topics to be addressed include foster care issues, human trafficking in social media, youth drug use during the COVID-19 pandemic, unaccompanied minors at the border and their stay in San Diego, impact of extended screen time on developing youth, gender affirming care, and more. The 2022 conference will offer a hybrid format with the option to attend virtually or in-person, with a limited capacity for in-person attendance to ensure physical distance and safety guidelines. Additional conference information and registration can be found at: <https://cicamh.com/>

Respectfully submitted,



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