



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 2024

BHS Workforce Education and Training Updates

Behavioral Health Workforce Shortage Report

On October 11, 2022, the Board of Supervisors (Board) received the report titled "*Addressing San Diego's Behavioral Health Workforce Shortage*" and directed the County Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to support legislation that would address behavioral health worker recruitment; training and retention; improve behavioral health workforce licensing and credentialing; supervision and training; higher education; and parity. Additionally, the CAO was directed to report back to the Board regularly on strategies and efforts made to address recruitment and retention. The report outlined five recommendations to address San Diego's workforce shortage: 1) Invest in competitive compensation; 2) Pursue administrative relief; 3) Build regional workforce training fund; 4) Establish regional training centers of excellence; and 5) Continue listening to workers. The following are updates on BHS' progress on addressing these recommendations.

- Behavioral health professionals identified the need to assess administrative burdens with the desire to further streamline documentation requirements. BHS was directed to explore opportunities to remove administrative barriers for those providing behavioral health services, and ultimately higher quality and more timely care provision. In order to streamline administrative requirements for the behavioral health system of care, BHS partnered with the Department of Purchasing and Contracting and issued a procurement in the form of a Request for Quotation (RFQ), for a consultant to conduct a comprehensive review and analysis of required behavioral health services documentation and contract monitoring practices. The RFQ was posted on March 1, 2023 with a closing date of March 29, 2023. The RFQ did not result in an award and was updated based on feedback received from key stakeholders, including behavioral health services providers and County subject matter experts. Following this process, the RFQ was re-issued on August 1, 2023 with a closing date of August 22, 2023. The re-issued RFQ did not result in an award.
- As an alternative strategy, BHS will be partnering with the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) to access technical assistance to review the County's behavioral health care documentation and contract monitoring practices and identify opportunities for administrative relief. CalMHSA is a Joint Powers of Authority formed in 2009 by counties throughout the state to work on collaborative projects that improve behavioral health care for all Californians. This includes partnering with counties to support implementation of California Advancing and

Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) documentation and payment reform. To date, BHS has moved forward with several key phases of CalAIM payment and documentation reform in alignment with State-required timelines, including conversion of contracts from cost-reimbursement structures to a fee-for-service structure. The additional and focused technical assistance that will result from partnership with CalMHSA will help ensure the County's continued local implementation of CalAIM behavioral health reform maximizes opportunities for administrative relief. This partnership with CalMHSA is anticipated to begin in early 2024.

- In May 2023, the Board approved the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Innovation Public Health Workforce Development and Retention Program proposal that was submitted to and subsequently approved by the California Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC). This proposal seeks to explore and implement strategies and incentives to address unmet needs within the region by recruiting, training, and retaining a diverse public behavioral health workforce. This new program will be operated by a contractor after a competitive procurement process. The provider will distribute and monitor the use of funding to support individuals seeking a variety of training, tuition support, upskilling and incentive opportunities designed to attract and retain workers in the public behavioral health field. The Request for Proposal (RFP) will be posted on BuyNet in early 2024. BuyNet can be accessed at the following link: <https://buynet.sdcounty.ca.gov/>.
- As noted, the fourth recommendation in the report addressed the need to establish regional training Centers of Excellence (COE). In November 2023, at the direction of the Board, BHS contracted with Interfaith Community Services to invest up to \$1 million over five years to administer the Behavioral Health Workforce COE program. The goals of the COE are training, education, and licensure of behavioral health workforce staff, enabling them to advance in their careers and fill hard-to-recruit clinical positions in our region. This County investment will allow Interfaith to continue to educate and upskill professionals in our region, while they simultaneously identify funding streams to ensure the program continues to be sustainable in the long-term.

Programs Supporting Recruitment and Interest in Public Behavioral Health Careers

- BHS has participated in events to highlight career opportunities in public behavioral health. On December 7, 2023, BHS participated in San Diego Unified School District's Health Career and College Symposium along with the Child and Family Well-Being and Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities departments. More than 300 students were selected from the district's Career Technical Education – Health Pathways Program, representing 23 schools at the event held at the University of California San Diego's Park and Market facility downtown. In partnership with these Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) departments, staff from each program discussed behavioral health career opportunities within each of their respective departments.
- The San Diego Community College District (SDCCD) provides a Public Mental Health Academy (PMHA) to facilitate workforce development and career pathways in public behavioral health by offering coursework leading to a PMHA Certificate. There are currently 527 students enrolled in the program, with 75% reporting they have lived mental health experience. In school year 2022-2023, 28 students graduated from the program with most graduates continuing their education to earn their Associates of Arts (AA) degree, transferring to a university, working, or looking for work within public behavioral health.
- In partnership with the Southern Counties Regional Partnership (SCRIP), a graduate student stipend opportunity continued to be provided to students doing their school year internships/practicums in a County or County-contract behavioral health program. In 2023, 30 students were awarded this stipend. It is anticipated that 30 students will be awarded this stipend in 2024.

- The UCSD Community Psychiatry Program (CPP) trains psychiatry residents/fellows and psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner trainees to advance the concepts of Community Psychiatry and promote work in community-based settings. The program also places psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner (PMHNP) trainees side-by-side with psychiatry residents throughout the entire program. As of December 2023, the program has thirteen (13) psychiatry residents and six (6) PMHNPs. The program has graduated nineteen (19) psychiatry residents and fifty-two (52) PMHNPs. Of those that graduated, seventeen (17) psychiatrists and forty-seven (47) PMHNPs continue to work in public behavioral health settings.
- In July 2023, SDSU shared that the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) had launched the statewide Public Behavioral Health (PBH) Master of Social Work (MSW) Training Program to address California's public behavioral health workforce development needs, with funding provided by the California Office of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI). The goal of this program is to increase employment and retention of MSWs in publicly funded behavioral health programs and services by providing selected MSW students with specialized training and stipend support. Nine students are currently in the first cohort, receiving \$25,000 per school year to utilize towards school related expenses including tuition. BHS has partnered with SDSU to develop learning opportunities for the students selected for this program.
- HHSA's Live Well Center for Innovation and Leadership People Subcommittee is also committed to support the recruitment of individuals to work in public service. In partnership with HHSA representatives from HHSA Human Resources, Office of Strategy and Innovation, Child & Family Well-Being, and Aging & Independence Services, the subcommittee has been mapping the current practices for workforce pipeline, recruitment, and retention of critical positions, as well as identifying strategies for future workforce pipeline, recruitment, and retention efforts. The first event for this combined partnership will occur at SDSU's annual agency fair for social work interns that will be held in February 2024.

Programs Supporting Retention of Staff Working Within Public Behavioral Health

Efforts have also been made to retain staff within public behavioral health. In partnership with the SCRP, a loan repayment program opportunity was offered for staff that work in "hard to fill" positions in both County and County-contracted behavioral health programs. In 2023, this program was managed by the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA). The program awarded 38 staff from San Diego County and County-contracted behavioral health programs with \$8,000 after 12-months of consecutive employment in their current County and County contracted BH programs. The application period for 2023/2024 closed in late November 2023.

Programs Supporting Continued Education and Training of BHS Staff and Contracted Staff

- In partnership with HHSA Human Resources, BHS, Child and Family Well-Being and Aging and Independent Services continued to be engaged in support of the clinical supervision program that provides both individual supervision and group supervision to County staff to support their goal to obtain their clinical license. This program is currently providing supervision hours for 10 County BHS staff.
- In partnership with SCRP, conferences were held to support behavioral health staff from County and County contracted programs. The intent of these conferences is to network, learn, and engage with colleagues from the southern county regions. In March 2023, 15 staff attended a two-day conference focused on Strategies for Addressing Trauma. In October 2023, 40 staff were provided the opportunity to attend a two-day conference for clinical supervisors with the goal of reviewing clinical supervision practices.
- The Cultural Responsiveness Academy (CRA), a program under the Academy of Professional Excellence with San Diego State Research Foundation, was awarded a contract on July 1, 2023. This academy is responsible for the provision of trainings that allows participants to explore cultural differences, recognize potential individual and organizational biases, and practice

culturally responsive behaviors through facilitated discussions. It is designed to create a space for self-assessment, the development of skills and strategies to identify and manage bias, and the opportunity to contribute to a project that will improve cultural responsiveness within the organization. This academy is available to BHS and BHS contracted staff.

- To align with the County of San Diego's core principles of Equity and Belonging, all BHS department staff undertook a three-part training series in January 2024 called *The Neuroscience of Decision-Making in Public Health: Excellence, Accuracy and Equity*. This series was presented by Kimberly Papillion, a renowned lecturer on implicit bias and a researcher in the field of neuroscience and the law. The training enlightened staff to potential instances of bias based on unconscious processes in the brain and provided tools to think critically about opportunities to interrupt these practices and ensure impartiality in decision-making.

BHS 2024 SPECIAL EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Critical Issues in Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CICAMH) Conference – April 26, 2024

Save the Date for the hybrid 9th Annual Critical Issues in Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CICAMH) Conference: Breaking Barriers: Innovative Approaches to Youth and Family Mental Well-Being, scheduled for Friday, April 26, 2024. Event details will be available soon and would be found at the following link: <https://cicamh.com/>.

Contract Awarded for Intensive Outpatient Program

The contract for the new Intensive Outpatient (IOP) program was awarded to San Diego Center for Children, effective January 9, 2024. IOP offers outpatient specialty mental health services to children and youth up to age 21 who would benefit from time limited programming in an intensive outpatient setting. Average length of stay for services is typically six to eight weeks with a cohort of similar age youth and condition. Program services are typically offered three to five times a week after school hours where youth attend Day Intensive Half (DIH) programming consisting of an evidenced-based group curriculum to addresses specific treatment issues. Additionally, the local model offers weekly caregiver groups and multi-family group once a month. The design includes a full range of ancillary services offered outside of the day treatment program hours. Ancillary services may include a full range of short-term outpatient Specialty Mental Health Services (SMHS) including assessment, evaluation, plan development, collateral, individual/group/family therapy, rehabilitation, Intensive Care Coordination (ICC), Intensive Home-Based Services (IHBS), crisis intervention, and case management services. Referrals to IOP typically come through an outpatient service provider and/or emergency screening/crisis stabilization unit when it is determined that intensive services are needed or as a step-down service from an acute setting.

30-Day Mental Wellness Challenge

BHS is excited to announce that the department's first ever 30-Day Mental Wellness Challenge will launch in February 2024. The Mental Wellness Challenge will be a fun, free, and accessible way for the community to engage in daily self-care activities that support mental wellness. Challenge materials and additional information will be available on BHS' Managing Your Mental Wellness webpage at the following link:

https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/bhs/mental_health_resources.html.

California Department of Healthcare Services (DHCS) Bulletin, Medi-Cal Provider Enrollment

As of January 1, 2024, the state is accepting applications from Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that employ and perform community health worker (CHW) delivered services to become reimbursable providers for services to Medi-Cal beneficiaries. DHCS, the administration and oversight entity for the state's Medi-Cal program, is establishing specific application and enrollment requirements for CBOs and Local Health Jurisdictions (LHJs) interested in becoming Medi-Cal providers.

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CBOs and LHJs brought on as Medi-Cal Providers will be able to either 1) bill DHCS -or- 2) bill a managed care plan contracted with DHCS, for the CHW services they provide to individuals insured by Medi-Cal (BHS is not involved in the billing process at this time).

More information can be found at the following link: <https://mcweb.apps.prd.cammis.medi-cal.ca.gov/page/community-based-organizations-and-local-health-jurisdictions-enrollment>.

Public Messaging Outreach and Education Services Contract Procurements

BHS is actively preparing for several imminent contract procurements related to public messaging outreach and education services. We encourage interested parties to participate in the planning and procurement process. Please reach out to us at engage.bhs@sdcounty.ca.gov to share your insights and contribute to this important initiative. For more information on these contracts, #559599 and #561649, visit the County of San Diego BuyNet procurement website at the following link: <https://buynet.sdcounty.ca.gov/>.

Respectfully submitted,



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