



# County of San Diego

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TO: The Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB)

FROM: Luke Bergmann, Ph.D., Director, Behavioral Health Services (BHS)

## **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES DIRECTOR'S REPORT – JUNE 2021**

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **County of San Diego Announces First \$5 Million of \$25 Million Grant**

On May 24th, the County of San Diego (County) announced the first \$5 million of \$25 million in grants will be distributed to community organizations for capital improvements to mental health facilities. The funding stems from redevelopment money that was in litigation for several years and an agreement between the City of San Diego and the County to place the lawsuit settlement into the behavioral health impact fund.

Among the community organizations to receive this first round of funding is La Maestra Clinic in City Heights which will receive \$4.7 million to build a four-story transitional housing center for low-income, uninsured people suffering from mental illness and addiction. The remaining \$300,000 will be divided as follows:

- Community Research Foundation will receive \$74,301 for three vehicles to transport people to medical appointments;
- Stepping Stone Residential Treatment Center in San Diego will receive \$37,401 for a new vehicle to transport patients in substance abuse treatment, and a shade sail to expand outdoor space for individual and group services;
- Sharp HealthCare Foundation will receive \$31,364 to expand their telehealth behavioral health sessions at Sharp Mesa Vista Hospital and Sharp McDonald Center. That will increase telehealth services for 170 people a month during the COVID-19 emergency and allow Sharp to provide group therapy for 265 people after the pandemic is over; and
- Jewish Family Service of San Diego will receive \$24,100 to expand its telehealth capacities at two sites in San Diego. This will help the organization offer behavioral health services, education, employment, housing assistance and social services to 800 people a month.

## **LIVE WELL SAN DIEGO UPDATES / SPECIAL EVENTS**

### **Upcoming Events**

#### **Recovery Happens Annual Community Event September 18, 2021**

Save the date for Recovery Happens 2021. The event is a celebration of individuals on the journey to recovery and those who support them. This year, the event will once again be virtual and will include engaging speakers, performers, and activities including a virtual resource fair that will be accessible on the BHS website throughout September. More details on the event will be shared as they become available.

### **UPDATES FROM THE CLINICAL DIRECTOR'S OFFICE (CDO)**

#### **Behavioral Health Workforce Collaborative Seminars**

The Behavioral Health Workforce Collaborative (BHCW) serves as an advisory body to BHS on the behavioral health workforce. The BHCW ensures the following five essential elements are incorporated into workforce development: community-oriented; culturally responsive; person- and family-centered; wellness driven; recovery, resilience and whole person focused. Since September 2019, the BHCW has facilitated several seminars with a renewed focus on diverse leadership and racial equity. Participants of the seminars expand beyond BHS staff and BHS contracted providers to include stakeholders from the community, education, health care and public safety that share an interest in public behavioral health.

Recent seminar topics presented by community leaders are as follows:

- Integrating Our Work and Our Approach
- San Diego's Racial Equity Gap
- Responding to Co-occurring Pandemics: COVID-19 and Anti-Black Racism
- Trauma-Informed Care Across Systems
- Mapping the School to Prison Pipeline

For more information, or to be added to the invite list for future seminars, please contact: [Kerry.Cavanaugh@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Kerry.Cavanaugh@sdcounty.ca.gov).

#### **Population Health Unit**

As part of the CDO, the newly created Population Health Unit aims to work seamlessly across sectors and disciplines to support the County of San Diego (County) collective impact model by building on the strengths of each sector in order to create healthier and more equitable communities. The Population Health Unit is led by Dr. Nicole Esposito, Assistant Clinical Director and Chief Population Health Officer and staffed by a team of epidemiologists.

The Population Health Unit's role is promoting data-driven solutions and evidence-based practices that effectively align both resources and outcomes with departments across the Health and Human Services Agency. The unit will work together with BHS leadership to engage in strategic planning and evaluation of programs to support proportional resource allocations based on community need and cognizant of health disparities across racial and ethnic groups. Through surveillance, evaluation, and continuous quality improvement, such alignment will support healthier, equitable, and sustainable communities in San Diego County.

### **Harm Reduction Update**

CDO is critically involved in supporting a paradigm shift in the County's approach to treating some of the most vulnerable people who use drugs (PWUD) in our community. The harm reduction approach aims to meet people where they are, with dignity and compassion, and utilizes interventions such as naloxone distribution, syringe exchange programs, and educational outreach which are proven to reduce overdoses, reduce disease transmission, and result in greater health and treatment outcomes for this population. Harm reduction is part of the continuum of services for people at risk of harm from substance use and integrates with the County's Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS).

BHS, in partnership with Public Health Services, has formed a Population Health Steering Committee (Committee), which is charged with the harm reduction work as its first area of focus. The Committee has been meeting regularly to draft a Comprehensive Harm Reduction Strategy (Strategy) for the County, plan and operationalize a naloxone distribution effort for the County, and create a Syringe Services Action Plan which will outline steps for bringing further syringe services to the PWUD in our region. The Strategy will be presented to Board of Supervisors on June 8, 2021. The Committee also prepared the Local Naloxone Standing Order, signed on May 21, 2021 by Dr. Wilma Wooten, the County's Public Health Officer, which will allow this lifesaving drug, which reverses opioid overdoses, to be distributed without a physician's prescription.

### **Community Experience Project**

The CDO, along with BHS's Quality Improvement Unit - Performance Improvement Team and the Prevention and Community Engagement Unit are collaborating with the UCSD Research Center and Rady Children's Hospital on implementation of the Community Experience Project. The proposed project includes four components: (1) development of the Community Experiences Dashboard, an interactive data dashboard; (2) creation of actionable summary metrics; (3) focus on engaging key stakeholders including community members in identification and interpretation of data; and (4) development of brief focused reports that synthesize key findings, highlight opportunities for and inform data-driven service planning and resource allocation. These components taken together, will provide local behavioral health disparities data which will be timely, accessible, and actionable for the community.

Respectfully submitted,



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cc: Nick Macchione, Agency Director  
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