



County of San Diego

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TO: Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB)

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

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES (BHS) DIRECTOR'S REPORT – MARCH 2023

BHS ADDRESSING POPULATION HEALTH AND EQUITY

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 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 the following: 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 has continued to grow 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 is 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 allows for the development and implementation of innovative programs and policies based on identified trends and needs. This data is also 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 other BHS units, strives to use this data-driven approach to improve behavioral health services and increase health equity in San Diego County.

Community Experience Partnership

An illustrative example of the population health approach is BHS's initiative to promote behavioral health equity through the Community Experience Partnership (CEP). The CEP aims to identify unmet behavioral health needs and to address their underlying systemic and regional inequities. The CEP works 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 was the development of an interactive dashboard that allows users to access behavioral health equity data by subpopulation (e.g., race, ethnicity, age, sexual, and gender identity) and geographic area. As of June 2022, the interactive dashboard is publicly available at www.communityexperiencepartnership.com. The dashboard has been utilized for community planning and by BHS Leadership for planning purposes.

A subsequent phase of the CEP is a Behavioral Health Equity Index (BHEI) to help highlight populations and neighborhoods at greatest risk for unmet behavioral health needs. The BHEI is a data-driven tool that allows users to explore differences in the root causes (also known as social determinants) of behavioral health across neighborhoods in San Diego County. Because the social determinants of behavioral health are multifaceted and complex, the BHEI is a composite index which combines information from multiple sources into a single score. This is a valuable tool to summarize data in a way that is interpretable and can help build community consensus for action. Understanding where inequities exist in our community is a first step towards identifying and addressing the factors that may contribute to behavioral health disparities.

Community members and key stakeholders were engaged in the identification, collection, analysis, and interpretation of data via focus groups, emailed surveys, and other means. The Community Experience Committee (CEC) included peers, family members, individuals with expertise in prevention, evaluation, and epidemiology, as well as representatives from the Cultural Competency Resource Team. The University of California, San Diego (UCSD) Research Centers has provided support and expertise throughout all phases of the CEC and will be responsible for ongoing data analysis.

The current phase of the CEP is the development of a Service Planning Tool. This tool will be utilized in the development of identifying areas of needs by producing a dashboard and a service planning report to summarize data and highlight cultural and regional considerations. This will be a tool required in the development for new statements of work and before Request for Proposals (RFPs) are issued. 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 work in the future.

BHS SPECIAL EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Shelter Beds for Youth Funded by the Behavioral Health Impact Fund

On February 6, 2023, Urban Street Angels (USA) announced the completion and opening of 20 new emergency shelter beds for youth at its downtown San Diego facility. Through a collaboration with the

City of San Diego, Supervisor Nathan Fletcher established the County-City Behavioral Health Impact Fund (BHIF) to provide one-time capital funding toward community-based behavioral health organizations to expand their capacity to provide services. USA was the recipient of a \$503,000 BHIF grant to cover the construction costs for the 20 beds. Youth began using the new beds and services on February 15, 2023. The 20 beds are in addition to 50 beds that are already occupied at USA's downtown homeless shelter. All projects supported with the BHIF are concentrated in the City of San Diego and help strengthen the region's continuum of care.

Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) 30-Day Public Review Period

The Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Three-Year Program and Expenditure Plan for Fiscal Years 2023-24 through 2025-26 will soon be posted to the BHS website for a 30-day public review and comment period. The review period is expected to begin on April 4, 2023 and end on May 4, 2023 when final comments will be heard at the May BHAB meeting. The MHSA Three-Year Plan will then be presented at the June 6, 2023 Board of Supervisors meeting for their review and approval, as required by the Mental Health Services Oversight & Accountability Commission (MHSOAC).

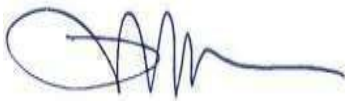
8th Annual Critical Issues in Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CICAMH) Conference – April 21, 2023

Save the Date for the hybrid 8th Annual CICAMH Conference: Building Resilience through Family Engagement, scheduled for Friday, April 21, 2023. The conference will focus on engaging families and caregivers of youth who struggle with mental health concerns to cultivate youth resilience and nurture mental health well-being.

Register at: <https://app.ce-go.com/CICAMH2023> -

For questions, email: CICAMHCONFERENCE@GMAIL.COM

Respectfully submitted,



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