

DATE: 4/14/2020

TO: Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors

Jeffrey V. Smith, M.D., J.D., County Executive

FROM: René G. Santiago, Director, County of Santa Clara Health System & Deputy  
County Executive

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René G. Santiago

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Toni Tullys, Director, Behavioral Health Services Department

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SUBJECT: Employee Concerns at Mental Health Urgent Care

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At the request of President Chavez and Supervisor Cortese, the Administration is providing an off-agenda report addressing employee concerns related to safety at the Mental Health Urgent Care (MHUC) Clinic. This report provides information on the background of the decision made by Behavioral Health Services Department (the Department), at the request of Valley Medical Center (VMC) to prepare for the anticipated COVID-19 hospital surge in Emergency Psychiatric Services (EPS) and Barbara Arons Pavilion (BAP). To address this need, the Department developed a plan for MHUC, which required deploying staff to a nearby clinic, and this change prompted staff concerns. This memo provides the steps that the Department has taken to address those concerns and to provide potential solutions to alleviate these concerns.

#### Background

On March 27, 2020, the VMC Chief Operating Officer for Behavioral Health Services met with the Department's Leadership to develop a strategy to decompress the census in EPS and BAP for the anticipated surge in patients due to the COVID-19 crisis. On March 31, 2020, BHSD Administration informed SEIU of moving MHUC services to be co-located with the Central Wellness and Benefits Center (CWBC), both located on the VMC campus. This move was in response to the mitigation efforts to decompress the EPS census and provide potential overflow space for the anticipated surge. This move was deemed a necessary action derived from the meeting on March 27, 2020. MHUC staff moved on April 3, 2020.

With day-to-day changes and actions mandated by the County CEO and Public Health Department in their efforts to mitigate potentially devastating effects to our County's health system, BHSD acknowledges that the move of MHUC is not an ideal solution and use of space. However, the move was seen as essential to ensure that patients transitioning in or out of EPS on the VMC campus are able to be seen, housed and supported during this time of crisis.

#### Assessment of Employee Concerns

Employees at MHUC expressed concerns and reported these concerns to their SEIU Union representative, who then reached out to BHSD Administration and its Labor Relations

Representative. Upon receiving the concerns, primarily focused on staff safety, BHSD and Labor Relations initiated conferences with SEIU to address their issues and potential solutions to alleviate them. Weekly standing meetings (calls) have been established to address these and other general concerns brought forth by the Union. The Department has been working in conjunction with Labor Relations to conduct assessments of all items of concern and have committed to acknowledging, following-up and working with SEIU to identify feasible solutions that can be implemented to alleviate the safety concerns by staff.

In addition, the Department restructured supervisory roles to better accommodate and support the staff and their change in environment and service delivery. The Department has reached out to the Facilities and Fleet Department (FAF) and the Director of Facilities Security to identify both immediate and longer-term, sustainable solutions. A dedicated Public Safety Officer has been assigned to MHUC/Central Wellness Clinic. The vacant Administrative Services Manager III position has been filled with a County employee, who will be the Department's main point of contact to collaborate with SEIU to develop feasible solutions and to coordinate projects associated with these solutions with the various departments that will be needed to assist.

#### Next Steps

The Department will continue to meet with SEIU on a weekly basis to 1) address current and new concerns, 2) collaborate with SEIU to determine best practices and solutions to prevent safety incidents and 3) enhance and maintain communication with SEIU to ensure that employees' concerns are being acknowledged and their ideas are being considered on this matter of high importance. Leadership has also committed to following-up with the Union as soon as clarity and confirmation on specific items have been determined.

Additionally, the Department will continue to be transparent and solicit ideas from staff in developing long-term strategies and concrete solutions to address these current safety concerns and any additional concerns that are addressed at Urgent Care or any of the Department's clinics.

cc: Miguel Marquez, Chief Operating Officer  
James R. Williams, County Counsel  
Megan Doyle, Clerk of the Board  
Chief Board Aides  
Debbie Dills Thompson, OBA Agenda Review Administrator