

County of Santa Clara

Office of the County Executive

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September 22, 2021

TO: Honorable Members of the Health and Hospital Committee
Jeffrey V. Smith, M.D., J.D., County Executive

FROM: Ky Le, Deputy County Executive ^{DS} kl
Sherri Terao, Ed.D., Director, Behavioral Health Services Department ^{DS} ST

SUBJECT: Recommendations from the Behavioral Health Contractors Association

On August 25, 2021 (Item No. 8), the Health and Hospital Committee (HHC) requested a report regarding various recommendations sent to the Board by the Behavioral Health Contractors Association (BHCA) in July 2021. This report summarizes the approach and processes that the Administration is collaboratively implementing in order to continuously expand and improve the system of specialty mental health services for some of Santa Clara County's poorest or most vulnerable residents.

In August 2021, Behavioral Health Services Department (BHSD) executive leaders and the BHCA committed to having ongoing meetings between BHSD executive leaders, the County Executive's Office, and the BHCA executive committee. These "Executive Leadership Meetings" will be used to discuss contractors' and BHSD's concerns on a range of issues. These meetings would complement staff-level compliance, contract management, and quality improvement meetings so that senior leaders throughout the system of care could monitor progress on key issues. Executive Leadership meetings in Summer and Fall 2020 enabled BHSD and BHCA to develop strategic budget reduction measures that would maintain current service levels. While not all BHCA's recommendations may be implemented, reconvening these meetings would provide a reliable forum in which to communicate perspectives and collaboratively solve problems. In addition, the BHSD agreed to prioritize several of BHCA's most pressing concerns, such as the new contract template and programs or service areas that have yet to return to full capacity.

While having the right processes ensures incremental progress and effective collaboration, the conversations must be guided by agreed-upon system-wide, impactful goals. The BHCA executive leadership reviewed the BHSD's strategic priorities, as outlined in its report to the Board on June 14, 2021 (Item No. 6[k]). The BHCA concurred with and is looking forward to working with BHSD on its five strategic goals.

1. Improve access to specialty mental health and substance use treatment services.
2. Fulfill the commitment to developing and deploying integrated clinical teams.
3. Provide individuals appropriate levels of care, including the services of Peer Support Specialists, as an aspect of the integrated treatment model.
4. Expand temporary residential treatment and permanent housing options.
5. Address workforce shortages.

Equally important, BHSD executive leaders and the BHCA executive committee agreed that one critical task was to develop meaningful client- and system-level outcome measures to ensure that modifications were tracking towards impactful, client-centered goals. For example, while service dosage and utilization of acute and emergency services are important, the specialty mental health system should be focused on measures of wellness, behavioral health, housing stability, or other client-centered outcomes.

Guided by systemwide priorities and strategies, the BHSD will work with BHCA and other stakeholders to develop, implement, and refine system improvements on an ongoing basis. For example, BHSD and BHCA agree that contractors need more intra-agency flexibility but developing and implementing appropriate contract language and protocols will require significant resources. It is not simply a matter of agreeing or disagreeing with a conceptual recommendation. Similarly, BHSD and contractors face critical workforce shortages, especially among licensed clinicians. The Administration agrees that solutions are needed but developing and implementing solutions will take time. Progress toward the strategic goals will be periodically shared with the HHC through the BHSD Director's report.

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