

Director's Report

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DEPARTMENT AND COUNTY NEWS

Behavioral Wellness Offers Community Support with Election Stress: The Behavioral Wellness led Community Wellness Team was present for community support surrounding election stress. There are plenty of reasons that make feeling anxious pretty normal right now. Living life in a pandemic has changed our lives and routines in every way imaginable, impacted finances, school and more. This is truly a year unlike no other. However, the addition of stress surrounding the presidential election and state of our nation can now be added to the list.

Earlier this year, the American Psychological Association conducted a “Stress in America” survey in which they found more than half (about 56%) of the people who responded, identifying the 2020 election as a significant stressor. In the end of June, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported that the highest rising levels of anxiety were among young adults, as well as people of color of all ages. The prevalence of anxiety symptoms among all populations was 3 times higher than the corresponding period in 2019.

The Department of Behavioral Wellness, who serves as the lead for the Community Wellness Team sponsored opportunities to connect and combat the stress so many will be experiencing during and post the upcoming election.

Let's Talk: The community was reminded of the opportunity to connect with a Behavioral Wellness Community Wellness Team member before and after the election for brief one-on-one confidential conversations. The Community Wellness Team can still be reached by calling 805-364-2750.

Post-Election: The Behavioral Wellness Community Wellness Team hosted virtual listening and support spaces after the election. These occurred each evening, November 3 – 6, from 5:30 PM – 6:30 PM. In addition, resource information on “Post-Election Stress” is located on the Behavioral Wellness website [here](#).

Resource Support for Organizations: Guidance on facilitating dialogues and other resource support was made available for community organizations.

Recognizing that stress connected to the current election may be felt by some for an extended period, below are tips for self-care:

- Stay informed with reliable information and take a break from information when you need to.
- Stay socially connected. Connect with supportive family and friends. Look for productive opportunities to communicate with people even when there may be disagreement.
- Set boundaries.
- Practice mindfulness strategies for self-care.
- Break the habit of ruminating on bad outcomes. Uncertainty is everywhere right now and can be a large contributor to stress.
- Focus on what you can control.
- Engage in meaningful activities.
- Stay physically active.

Senior Holiday Phone Bridge Program: The Behavioral Wellness Community Wellness Team is helping to keep seniors connected through the holidays. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, seniors have been among the most vulnerable of groups. Not only for physical health reasons, but also for their mental health. Many studies report that loneliness among older adults has increased significantly over the past year.

In addition to the current stressors of living life in a pandemic, and the social isolation being experienced by older adults, many older adults may also be living in a senior living environment which is not permitting family visitors even if socially distanced. Loneliness and social isolation for older adults have a deep emotional impact, sometimes leading to depression and anxiety and can even have a significant impact on their physical health.

Holidays can be lonely times of the year for older adults who may not live near their families. Holidays also carry memories and feel like a time when family should be around. And this year, many will not be surrounded by family as they normally would be, due to the safety considerations aimed to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Not being able to look forward to time spent with family over the holidays can have a profound impact on the mental health of older adults who are already feeling isolated.

The Behavioral Wellness Community Wellness Team has developed the Senior Bridge Program to provide support to older adults through the holiday season, and beyond. Those interested may call the Community Wellness Team at 805-364-2750 and sign up for just one call or for regular friendly phone calls from volunteers from Hospice of Santa Barbara. We truly are all in this together, and with that knowledge, we will get through this together. Let's make sure nobody has to do this alone. If you know of an older adult who may benefit from connection by phone, please share this information.

Quality Measurement and Improvement Program Manager Appointed: After a lengthy recruitment process, Behavioral Wellness is pleased to welcome Dr. Patricia Gonzalez as the new Behavioral Wellness Quality Measurement and Improvement Program Manager and will work within the Office of Quality Care and Strategy Management. Dr. Gonzalez began her work with Behavioral Wellness on October 19, 2020. Dr. Gonzalez holds a doctorate in Social and Health Psychology from Colorado State University. She also completed a Post-Doctoral fellowship at City of Hope National Medical Center and a Post-Doctoral Fellowship at San Diego State University (SDSU). She has secured grant funding from the

National Institute of Health, American Cancer Society, and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services. Previously, Dr. Gonzalez served as the principal evaluator for a SAMHSA funded Assisted Outpatient Treatment program. She brings a well-rounded 20-year record in research and evaluation, quality improvement, statistics, and program development and implementation. She is an author on over 60 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters. We warmly welcome Dr. Gonzalez to the Behavioral Wellness team.

2020 Charitable Giving Campaign: Our collective County and Behavioral Wellness family has been able to stay employed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Others have not been so fortunate, and in need of additional support. Behavioral Wellness Team Members are encouraged to consider giving what they can, large or small. Every contribution makes a difference.

Every year, employee donations make an incredible difference in the lives of thousands of children, adults, and families across our county. However, support is even more important right now as United Way and other nonprofits work together to help those most impacted by COVID-19. To learn more about this year's campaign, please visit <http://sbchome.co.santa-barbara.ca.us/charitable/home.sbc>. Employees can donate online to the campaign at this link. A paper form is also available at this link if this method is preferred.

Santa Barbara Regional Partnership Meetings: The **Adult** meeting took place in October. During this meeting, Nick Papageorge from the Mental Wellness Center shared of services offered through the Mental Wellness Center. Of the many services they provide, are employment services, family services, education as well as the Fellowship Club/Recovery Learning Center. The Fellowship Club/Recovery Learning Center has long served as a meeting place for various classes, support groups and more. Additional free services offered through this resource include a warm support line, computer and phone use, warm lunch served Monday – Friday, care closet and visit from the doctors without walls staff. In addition, the Mental Wellness Center offers residential services for a total of 91 beds available for adults living with a serious mental illness.

Other program updates included **Veronica Heinzelmann, Behavioral Wellness Regional Manager**, sharing of the recent hiring of a second supervisor for the Adult clinic. Lt. Anthony Espinoza from the Sheriff's Department shared of the Jail Based Competency Treatment (JBCT) program which launched November 3, 2020. This program will offer services while people are in custody at the jail. The program is designed for individuals who are felony offenders and determined Incompetent to Stand Trial. Amanda Pyper with CenCal Health shared of a campaign currently occurring to encourage members to continue obtaining medical services. This campaign was designed as result of providers reporting a large drop in members attending important medical appointments.

The **Children's** meeting took place on October 15. Christy Stillwell, Founder and Executive Director for What is LOVE presented at this meeting. What is LOVE was founded in 2012 and is dedicated to promoting healthy adolescent relationships through education and linkage to resources. Christy shared data on the prevalence of violence, victimization and sexual abuse in teen relationships. She also shared tips for supporting youth who may be experiencing adolescent relationship abuse.

With the COVID-19 pandemic making in person support more difficult, What is LOVE offers remote learning and connection to resources. Confidential sessions are available to students in need via Zoom, email

info@whatisLOVEteens.org for an appointment. Some youth have expressed feeling “Zoom fatigue” and are uninterested in joining additional Zoom sessions. What is LOVE has embraced the idea of relationship coaching via Instagram. WIL plans to host live teachings, interviews, and discussions on this platform. Please like and follow [@whatisloveteens https://www.instagram.com/whatisloveteens/](https://www.instagram.com/whatisloveteens/).

Change Agents: Change Agents met this month to review current process improvement processes in clinics and programs and receive feedback and support from the team. Change Agents continued to work on current projects which include: developing a more welcoming and informative lobby using client art; increasing group attendance; increasing appointment attendance (decreasing the no show rate) by utilizing RxNt scheduler and appointment reminders; and, improving identification and linkage of youth receiving mental health services to community providers for Substance Use Disorders. The Change Agents will not meet next month due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Children’s System of Care (CSOC) Action Team: The Children’s System of Care (CSOC) Action Team met on October 22 and continued their discussion on core topics. These core topics include the four primary action goals of the team and are: Safety/Resiliency, Youth of Color, Criteria for Services and Access to Care and Engagement. The November meeting will be a joint meeting with CAPC and CSOC and will be held on November 19 from 9 AM – 11 AM.

Consumer and Family Member Action Team (CFMAT): The Behavioral Wellness Help@Hand Project Manager, [Vanessa Ramos](#), provided CFMAT members with an update on their current efforts of providing digital literacy to consumers, family members and community members by hosting Appy Hours via the Zoom Platforms. The October Appy hours sessions focused on how to use the QR readers, BWell QR Bookmark to access BWell website and phone cameras. The Help@Hand team will provide digital literacy groups at the PHF and assist clients with warm hand off upon discharge from the PHF to the outpatient system of care. CFMAT members were provided information about: Senate Bill 803, Behavioral Wellness’ collaboration with Crestwood Behavioral Health in training 25 peers in the practice of Peer Support Services, an update on the MHSA community planning sessions that will be happening virtually, the ACCESS California update by Chuck Hughes and subcommittee updates. CFMAT meets the third Friday of each month from 1PM to 2:30PM. Our next meeting will be Nov. 19, 2020.

Cultural Competency and Diversity Action Team (CCDAT): The October meeting began with an update on the various monthly *Appy Hours* sessions the Help@Hand team is providing for consumers, family members and community members. The October’s sessions instructed participants on using QR Readers and phone cameras. Additionally, CCDAT members had an opportunity to learn about the importance of the Whole Person Care. This presentation was provided by Tony Hollenback, Lompoc’s Regional Manager, focusing on the history, providing examples of how it can be utilized in a mental health care setting, and how integration of Whole Person Care has been facilitated in Behavioral Wellness. At our next meeting, CCDAT members will continue to discuss the MHSA’s Whole Person Care initiative.

Forensic Action Team: The Forensic Action Team Meeting seeks to connect a wide variety of leaders and stakeholders invested in cross-sector collaboration and ongoing systemic enhancements for services provided to criminal justice-involved juveniles and adults. Meetings occur monthly on the 4th Wednesdays

@ 1:30-3:00 pm (via Zoom until further notice). The October meeting involved a lively roundtable discussion with a diverse group of stakeholders and forensic partners regarding the successes and challenges involved with the new countywide Prop 47 and AB1810 mental health diversion initiatives and programming designed to reduce the duration of incarceration and promote individuals stabilizing in the community rather than going to state hospitals.

Please Note: The Forensic Action Team meeting has been cancelled for November due to the holidays and the December meeting will be held on **Wednesday, December 16th @ 1:30-3:00 pm**. Please contact Shana Burns, LMFT, Forensics Services Manager, at (805) 335-4263, with any questions and/or if you would like to be added to the invite list.

NATIONAL AND STATE NEWS

State Suicide Prevention Efforts Remain a Legislative Focus: California legislation recently approved the passage of Assembly Bill 2112 which creates a statewide Office of Suicide Prevention. Assemblymember James C. Ramos (D-Highland) introduced AB 2112 in early February. The passage of AB 2112 and the creation of a statewide office of suicide prevention is a critical step forward in statewide coordinated focus on suicide prevention, with special focus on our youth.

Among other tasks, the state Office of Suicide Prevention would be charged with the following:

- Providing strategic guidance to statewide and regional partners regarding best prevention practices;
- Requiring the new office to focus resources on the highest risk groups such as youth, Native American youth, older adults, veterans, and LGBTQ persons;
- Conducting state evaluations of regional and state suicide prevention policies;
- Reviewing data to identify opportunities to reduce suicide, including documenting aborted suicide attempts and crisis service interventions;
- Marshalling the insights and energy of medical professionals, scientists, public health experts and others to address the crisis;
- Disseminating information to achieve statewide progress, including coordinated and culturally appropriate campaigns to reach populations with high suicide rates;
- Reporting to the Legislature on progress in reducing suicide rates.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened California's rates of death by suicide for youth given the greater challenges faced by youth with online learning, social emotional impact and the stressors of financial hardship which are present in many families. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people ages 15 to 24, according to a 2017 study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Also, CDC released 1991-2017 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data that reported that one in six high school students stated they seriously considered ending their lives and more than one in 12 reported attempted suicides. AB 2112 will now be moving forward to the Senate for review.

SYSTEMS CHANGE CALENDAR

Please Note: Due to COVID-19, to protect the health and safety of our staff and other partners, no Action Team meetings will be held in person for the foreseeable future. All will be held remotely.

- **Behavioral Wellness Commission:** The Behavioral Wellness Commission meets on the third Wednesday of every month from 3:00pm – 5:00pm. Video conferencing is available at the Santa Barbara Children’s Clinic large conference room, Santa Maria Clinic Conference Room and the Lompoc Children’s Clinic Newport Harbor Room. Questions: Jacob Ibrahim at jibrahim@co.santa-barbara.ca.us
- **Change Agent Meeting:** Change agents meet the fourth Wednesday of every month 9 – 11 am except during quarterly in-person meetings, which are 9 am – 12 noon. Video conferencing is available at the Santa Barbara Children’s Clinic, Small conference room; and the Santa Maria Adult Clinic large conference room located at 500 West Foster Road, Santa Maria. Questions: Janal Lopez, janlopez@co.santa-barbara.ca.us
- **Lompoc Regional Partnership Meeting:** Meetings occur every other month on the third Tuesday at 301 N. R Street. Questions: Anthony Hollenback, ahollenback@co.santa-barbara.ca.us
- **Santa Barbara Adult Regional Partnership:** meets every 3rd Monday of the month from 10:00 am – 11:00 am at the Santa Barbara Children’s Clinic, large conference room. Questions: Veronica Heinzelmann, vheinzelmann@co.santa-barbara.ca.us
- **Santa Barbara Children’s Regional Partnership:** 3th Thursday of the month from 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm at the Santa Barbara Children’s Clinic, large conference room. Questions: Veronica Heinzelmann, vheinzelmann@co.santa-barbara.ca.us.
- **Santa Maria Children’s Regional Partnership Meeting** is held every 3rd Monday of the month at 10 am in the large meeting room at the Foster Road Clinic. Questions: Roberto Rodriguez at robertor@co.santa-barbara.ca.us
- **Santa Maria Adult Regional Partnership** occurs every 3rd Monday of the month at 11 am in the large meeting room at the Foster Road Clinic. Questions: Questions: John Winckler at jwinckler@co.santa-barbara.ca.us
- **The Housing, Empowerment, Action and Recovery Team (HEART)** meets the second Wednesday of every other month, 1:00-2:30 p.m. Locations: Behavioral Wellness Conference Room 261 and Santa Maria Annex via videoconference. Contact Laura Zeitz, lazeitz@sbcbswell.org
- **The Cultural Competency and Diversity Action Team (CCDAT)** meets the second Friday of each month, 9:30-11:00 am, Locations: Santa Barbara Children’s Clinic Large Conference Room 119, Santa Maria Annex and Lompoc B St. Contact Maria Arteaga at 805-681-5208 or marteaga@co.santa-barbara.ca.us

or Anthony Hollenback at 805-737-6610 or ahollenback@co.santa-barbara.ca.us to get zoom log in information.

- **The Consumer and Family Member Action Team** meets the third Thursday of the Month from 1 – 2:30pm. Locations: Behavioral Wellness Santa Barbara Conference Room 261, Lompoc Children’s New Port Room the Santa Maria Annex Room via videoconference. Contact Maria Arteaga at 805-681-5208 or marteaga@co.santa-barbara.ca.us
- **The Crisis Action Team** meets the second Thursday of the month, 2:30 – 4:00 pm, Santa Barbara Children’s large conference room 119. Contact Jeff Shannon, jeshannon@sbcbswell.org .
- **The Children’s System of Care Action Team** meets the 4th Thursday of the month, 10:30 am - 12:00 noon. SELPA Conference Room, 240 E. Hwy. 246, Suite 200, Buellton CA 93127. Contact Anthony Hollenback at ahollenback@co.santa-barbara.ca.us
- **Forensic Action Team** will be meeting every other month on the 4th Wednesday from 1:30 - 3. Meetings are held at the Behavioral Wellness Children’s Mental Health Services building, room 119, located at 429 N. San Antonio Rd in Santa Barbara. **Note:** The Forensic Action Team meeting has been cancelled for November due to the holidays and the December meeting will be held on **Wednesday, December 16th @ 1:30-3:00 pm**. For questions or Zoom log in information, please contact Shana Burns at sburns@co.santa-barbara.ca.us or Celeste Andersen at candersen@sbcbswell.org