

Director's Report

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DEPARTMENT AND COUNTY NEWS

How to Cope During the Holidays with COVID and Stay-At-Home Orders: For many people, the normal holiday season can often bring about stress. This holiday season, we have the additional stress of how to celebrate and honor traditions, with stay-at-home orders due to the rising cases of COVID. We have all made many sacrifices already and everyone is feeling fatigued.

It will be especially important this season to take extra steps to focus on our mental health, and keep in mind what we *can* do. The holidays are not cancelled because of COVID, and neither should our hope be. If we continue to support one another, we will make it through this challenging time together and come out stronger than before. Here are some important reminders during the holiday season:

Acknowledge your feelings. If someone close to you has recently died and this is the first holiday without them, or you have an ill family member and are grieving being unable to gather as a family, or simply knowing you can't gather with friends or family outside your household this year, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief.

Reach out. If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out friends, family, faith-based leaders or other virtual social gatherings. There are many ways to engage in holiday events which are happening virtually and still feel the holiday spirit. The simple act of saying out loud how you feel to another, can be very helpful.

Find meaningful activity. Volunteering your time to help others is a good way to lift your mood and broaden your connections with others. For example, consider dropping off a hand made holiday card or gift to the doorstep of someone you know may be alone this holiday season.

Be realistic. Let go of the constant thinking of what will not be the same this year. Keep in mind that the holidays don't have to be perfect or just like years past. Choose a few traditions to hold on to that can continue despite the COVID impact, and be open to creating new ones. Find new ways to celebrate together such as sharing pictures, emails or zoom chats with festive holiday backgrounds. Even though the holidays will look different this year, find ways to celebrate – it is actually just what we all need right now!

Set aside differences. Not everyone will feel the same way that you do. Try to accept family members and friends as they are, rather than wishing they would see things a different way. Set aside grievances until a better time for discussion. Show extra patience and understanding to others right now, and to yourself.

Take breaks. Carve out time for yourself. Find an activity you enjoy. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing, and restoring your energy.

Stick to a budget. Before you do your gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an abundance of gifts. This will only make you feel worse once the bills catch up.

Plan ahead. Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, connecting with friends and other safe activities. This allows you to take time to enjoy the holiday season rather than trying to cram it all together at last minute. If preparing holiday dinners for your household, plan your menus and then make your shopping list to help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients.

Learn to say no. Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. If it's not possible to say no to a particular work demand, try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time. Take control of pausing and slowing down.

Don't abandon healthy habits. With many working from home and now staying home to help stop the spread of the virus, it can be easy to lose sight of healthy habits and routines. Here are some tips:

- Eat healthy and balanced meals
- Get plenty of sleep
- Include physical activity and getting outdoors in your daily routine
- Limit time watching or reading the news

Reach out for help if needed. Reach out and connect with other people. If despite the connections with others, you still feel consistently sad or anxious, irritable, hopeless, having trouble sleeping or difficult managing regularly daily routines, reach out to a mental health professional.

If you, or a loved one, is experiencing a mental health crisis and need immediate assistance please call the **Behavioral Wellness 24/7 Access Line at 888-868-1649.**

To connect with the **Community Wellness Team** and get connected with mental health resources or to be linked to a volunteer caller through the **Senior Holiday Phone Bridge Program**, please call **805-364-2750.**

34 Bed Mental Health Rehabilitation Center Opens in Lompoc: The Department of Behavioral Wellness has contracted with Crestwood Behavioral Health Inc. for the operation of the county's first ever Mental Health Rehabilitation Center (MHRC). Located at the Champion's Center in Lompoc, this program will open on Monday, November 30 and provide 34 beds for people experiencing the impact of mental illness. With the support of this program, many individuals will be able to return from out of county care, to live within their community. After further renovations occur, additional beds will be added.

Crestwood Behavioral Health Inc. is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) and operates programs statewide. They are a long-time contract provider with Behavioral Wellness and also currently contracted to operate the Behavioral Wellness Crisis Residential Treatment program in South County.

Patty Blum, PhD, Executive Vice President for Crestwood Behavioral Health, Inc, says “I have worked with the Behavioral Wellness team to support and expand their services and system of care since 2010, specifically attempting to open an MHRC within the county since 2012. The county led the way in partnering with the Hospital Association and the local hospital.”

The Champion’s Healing Center MHRC provides the structure and support necessary, within a secured setting, for people living with mental illness and needing extra support in developing the skills necessary to live independently within the community. Services provided are individualized based on the unique needs of clients being served and will support with life skills, jobs skills and individual living skills needed to integrate to living within the community.

Sharon Byrne, Chair, Behavioral Wellness Commission shares, “These new beds are a huge boost to our county’s capacity to successfully treat mental illness at the highest levels of care. We can finally end the need to send people out of county for the treatment they so desperately need, and that’s a huge win.” “The Department of Behavioral Wellness Director, Dr. Gleghorn, has reported on this consistently to the Behavioral Wellness Commission, and we have applauded how determined she was to get this facility opened. Thank you to everyone that worked so hard to achieve this huge milestone for our county as it will be a huge benefit to our communities and families seeking treatment for their loved ones,” says Byrne.

The Champions Center will also be the new location for Behavioral Wellness Lompoc Adult Clinic and Crisis Services.

Loss of Additional Life of Staff Member at the Psychiatric Health Facility: After suffering through the passing of three employees during the months of August and September, due to medical issues, the Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF) lost another of its beloved staff members to illness on November 9th.

Alexander Romano, known as “Alex” to his PHF family, was a Licensed Vocational Nurse on the night shift and an invaluable member of the team. Some of the many highlights and memories of Alex:

- Alex work at the PHF for a total of 7 years. He also worked for Ventura County Mental Health for 14 years.
- Alex was a down to earth, genuine human being, known for making personal connections with all around him.
- He was a favorite among patients – his kind, quietly confident manner brought reassurance to even the most distraught clients. His ability to de-escalate a situation just by his mere presence brought a sense of calm where ever he went.

- Alex always looked out for others, would frequently go out of his way to help, and demonstrated how much he cared in all he did. From consoling a grieving staff member, while also grieving himself, to walking co-workers out to their cars after dark.
- Even with his two-hour commute to work from his home in Bakersfield, Alex would offer to pick up extra shifts if it meant supporting the PHF.
- Alex will always be remembered for his great smile, positive attitude and ability to make people laugh. His kind heart and compassion for others will be greatly missed.
- Alex is survived by his wife and their three children.

Alcohol and Drug Program Update: The Alcohol and Drug Program (ADP) now has two in-county providers who offer intensive residential treatment services for clients with co-occurring disorders and complex needs. The Salvation Army and Good Samaritan Services will now provide Clinically Managed High-Intensity Residential Services (ASAM Level 3.5) to Drug Medi-Cal eligible clients who meet medical necessity. ADP now also provides Medically Monitored Withdrawal Management (detox) services at Tarzana Treatment Center (ASAM WM Level 3.7). Due to recommendations made by EQRO, our cultural competency (CC) division will be allocating more of their resources to ensure ADP meets all cultural competency requirements. CC staff will assist ADP staff with integrating the CC Plan, providing outreach and developing programming that will ensure all members of our community are engaged and served in the prevention and treatment continuums of care.

26th Annual Mental Health Arts Festival Virtual Celebration: All are invited to join the Mental Wellness Center for a virtual celebration as they honor the work of talented artists and celebrate the power of creative expression. For the past 25 years, the Mental Wellness Center has hosted a Mental Health Arts Festival at De La Guerra Plaza. The event is designed to raise awareness and reduce stigma of mental illness, while showcasing the talents and identities of people affected by mental health diagnoses.

"This event offers a unique opportunity for individuals living with mental illness to exhibit their creative talents, enhance their self-esteem, and be perceived as worthy and valuable members of our community," shared Darcy Keep, Mental Wellness Center Board Member and Arts Festival Committee Chair.

Every summer, more than 60 local artists exhibit their talents and share paintings, drawings sculptures, jewelry, poetry, music and more. Due to COVID this year, we've had to sadly cancel our annual festival and have decided to continue our celebration online.

Please consider joining online this year as 26 years of the Mental Health Arts Festival is celebrated. To join online, please click [here](#).

Santa Barbara Regional Partnership Meetings: The Santa Barbara Children's Regional Partnership met on November 19th, 2020. This meeting began with a presentation from SAFTY which is the Behavioral Wellness contracted crisis response program for children and families. Casa Pacifica is the program operator. SAFTY shared an overview of the program, which serves youth under the age of 21, as well as an update on data which shows a slight decrease in activity, but otherwise has remained active throughout the impact of COVID-19. Sherry Robin, Program Manager of CALM's Great Beginnings program shared of two

parenting classes currently being offered in Spanish. In addition, CALM is planning to restart their healthy family support group for victims of domestic violence, in January of 2021. In addition, Anne Cravens, Program Coordinator with New Beginnings Counseling Center shared of a Mindful Parenting Series which will be launching in Spanish. The series is also available in English.

The **Adult** Regional Partnership meeting took place on November 16, 2020. Emily Allen, Northern SBCO United Way, shared several updates include a replenishing of cloth mask supplies, solar chargers and prepared meals being distributed as well as a hotline number for the Home for Good program which is open Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. and can be reached by calling 805-450-3558.

Ramona Winner from the Mental Wellness Center shared recognition of the Holiday Season this year, during the pandemic. Programming continues to be offered despite the challenges of social distancing. K Natalia Corral from the American Indian Health & Services shared that counseling appointments are at capacity but that a wait list is available (all appointments offered via telehealth). Lastly, **Veronica Heinzelmann, Regional Manager for Behavioral Wellness**, shared of recent staff changes. Sara Grasso, Program Manager for ACT and Homeless Services is no longer with the department. Coverage for these duties is being shared among Behavioral Wellness staff.

Lompoc Regional Partnership Meeting: The Lompoc Regional Partnership met last on November 17, 2020 and included representatives from the Lompoc Region, community partners and Santa Barbara County Public Health Department. Review occurred of services, supports and programs which respond to the urgent community needs of housing, food supply and basic needs as impacted by COV9D-18. The group also discussed strengthening the collaboration with the Lompoc Police Department and will be inviting Chief Joseph Mariani to join the next meeting which will be held on January 19, 2021.

Children’s System of Care (CSOC) Action Team: The Children’s System of Care Action Team held their annual joint meeting on November 20, 2020 with representatives for both the Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC) and the Children’s System of Care Action Team (CSOC) present. A year in review of highlights and accomplishments were presented along with action items being developed for 2021. Barb Finch, with the Department of Social Services, presented on risk factors for Child Abuse Prevention and ways CAPC and CSOC have continued to respond to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. The next CSOC meeting will take place on January 28, 2021.

Consumer and Family Member Action Team (CFMAT): CCDAT members were provided a presentation by Gabriela Labraña from Cencal on the Population Needs Assessment. Cencal shared that one of their focus areas in mental health is outreaching to the Spanish speaking community. As a result of this assessment, Cencal has developed an educational campaign as a strategy to outreach to the Spanish speaking community. During this month’s meeting, the Help@Hand Team also gave updates on the peer run digital platform, including project goals for fiscal year 2021. Help@Hand is focusing on bridging the gap between discharge from the Psychiatric Health Facility and a client's first appointment. This meeting also hosted group discussing on whole person care and how to encourage alternative, culturally appropriate services while meeting requirements for Drug Med-Cal certified facilities. Lastly, the meeting reviewed the COVID-19 Safety Wellness Plan and resource magnet created by the Latinx and Indigenous Migrant COVID-

19 Response Task Force's Mental Health and Wellness Working Group. Updates were provided on the ongoing collaboration with the Santa Ynez Tribal Health Center and the yearly cultural competence achievements of Behavioral Wellness' Alcohol and Drug Program.

Crisis Action Team: This month's meeting began with the announcement of the opening of the Champion's Center in Lompoc. Two patients were admitted on the first day of opening. Several additional updates followed, from members of the Crisis Action Team. The QCM team provided a report on dialogues with numerous inpatient acute hospitals in efforts of maintaining ongoing placement options when needed. QCM also reported on the Access Line. They shared that average wait times as well as the abandoned call rates have both reduced significantly since April.

Christina Lombard, from Casa Pacifica, informed the team that SAFTY has been placing more minors into LPS facilities outside the county who are on 5585 holds. Michelle Reib from Cottage Hospital updated on the new physicians currently working at Cottage and shared that they are all quite busy and doing well.

Sylvia Bernard from Good Samaritan updated the team on the "pop-up" shelter about to launch in Isla Vista. Lastly, **Carla Cross, Behavioral Wellness Training Coordinator**, informed the group about a new effort to train department employees in Mental Health First Aid, and announced that we have four certified CSEC trainers within the department.

Cultural Competency and Diversity Action Team (CCDAT): During the November meeting, **Vanessa Ramos, Bilingual Health Care Coordinator**, shared that the Help@Hand project started a Technology and Your Wellness Group at the Psychiatric Health Facility. She provided updates on the peer run digital platform, including project goals for fiscal year 2021. Help@Hand is focusing on bridging the gap between the Psychiatric Health Facility and a client's first appointment. This followed with a presentation by **Enrique Bautista, Patients' Rights Advocate**, who shared the Safety and Wellness Plan and magnet created in collaboration with the Latinx and Indigenous Migrant COVID-19 Response Task Taskforce's Mental Health and Wellness Working Group. This safety plan was developed to help reduce anxiety/chronic stress by creating a plan in case a person tests positive for COVID-19. Lastly, CFMAT members were provided subcommittee updates on the CFMAT newsletter, CFMAT brochure, Pool of Champions and TAY focus. CFMAT meets monthly on third Thursday, from 1 to 2:30 p.m.

Housing, Empowerment, Action and Recovery Team (HEART): The team met on December 9th and reviewed the new opening of the Mental Health Rehabilitation Center (MHRC) at the Champions Center in Lompoc (more information on this opening referenced earlier in this newsletter edition). Additionally, the team discussed the plan for all No Place Like Home (NPLH) projects. If projects that are applying for competitive funding are awarded the same amount, Behavioral Wellness will exceed the HEART target goal of developing 50 housing units. The team discussed the Homekey project in Lompoc which will be beginning on December 28th.

NATIONAL AND STATE NEWS

Behavioral Health Leaders Unite to Support the Declaration of Racism as a Public Health

Crisis: A growing list of city and county jurisdictions across the state are declaring racism to be a public

health emergency or crisis. The California Alliance of Child and Family Services (CACFS) and the California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies (CBHA) stand in strong support of these actions as a first step in acknowledging the realities of systemic, institutional, and structural racism that leads to abuse of power and racial injustice.

Common elements across these declarations and resolutions include:

- acknowledging the effects of intergenerational racism on population health, especially anti-Black racism,
- assessing governments' internal policies and procedures with a racial equity lens,
- advocating for laws and regulations that center and promote racial equity,
- ensuring inclusivity and diversity in leadership, workforce, hiring and contracting,
- promoting educational efforts to address and dismantle racism,
- identifying clear goals and objectives, including specific benchmarks to assess progress and,
- securing adequate resources for anti-racism activities.

Public health and health care leaders around the nation have also spoken out and issued statements about racism and public health. For instance, the American Psychological Association expressed that "COVID-19's disproportionately lethal impact on Black, Latinx and Native American people has revealed just how unequal our nation's health outcomes are." The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy stated that they were "outraged by the continued racial trauma, violence, and loss that our communities of color are experiencing in this country." The National Association of Social Workers vowed to "continue (their) efforts to ensure respect, inclusion, fairness and equity in our social work practices and social justice actions for and with the individuals, communities and families that NASW members serve. (They) are committed to creating and sustaining healthy environments where Black Lives Matter and are valued and supported in all that (they) do as social workers." The American Academy of Family Physicians spoke about the costs of racism in generating tens of billions of excessive medical costs and loss in productivity every year and vowed to develop "a family medicine workforce as diverse as the U.S. population." The Institute for Healthcare Improvement acknowledged that it would be "in a state of 'becoming' anti-racist because this work requires lifelong commitment and vigilance."

"The California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies recognizes that racism negatively impacts social determinants of health among historically underserved communities," said Le Ondra Clark Harvey, CEO of the CBHA. "Without first admitting that racism is in itself a public health crisis, we cannot in good faith say we are working towards real systemic and structural change. By refusing to address this damaging crisis, health inequities will continue to exist, and the overall health of our state will suffer. At CBHA, we are aware of the impact that racism has on our behavioral health clients and we are committed to advocating for them and the providers that serve them."

"It is our responsibility to address the real health determinants of racism within our nation and act now to ensure that we can continue to heal through understanding, compassion, and justice," said Christine Stoner-Mertz, CEO of the California Alliance. "The first step to every problem is to acknowledge that it exists. Racism is a public health crisis, and as the Alliance continues to advocate for children, youth, and

families served in our public systems, we will work to be accountable to them, to ensure all voices are heard, and to do better on their behalf."

It is imperative that we join together to recognize the structural racism that continues to exist in many of our public healthcare systems.

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: Karen Campos at kcampos@sbcbswell.org
- **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