

Director's Report

January 20, 2021



Alice Gleghorn, Ph.D., Director
Santa Barbara County Department of Behavioral Wellness
(805) 681-5220 ♦ <http://countyofsb.org/behavioral-wellness>

DEPARTMENT AND COUNTY NEWS

Psychological First Aid as a Simple Tool to Help with Mental Health During the Pandemic: As we have continued life in the pandemic, we have also been challenged with the impact this has had on our mental health and the mental health of others. The Center for Disease Control reported in the fall that symptoms of anxiety had tripled and symptoms of depression had quadrupled among a large study group, as compared to 2019. And at a time that mental health services are needed more than ever, many systems are reporting services being stretched as county workers are reassigned to help with the COVID-19 related tasks. We all need to strengthen and sustain our psychological resilience as we continue to weather this storm with local case numbers, hospitalizations and deaths now rising higher than ever before. Psychological First Aid or Mental Health First Aid are simply tools that can help people in the community who are experiencing psychological distress from pandemic fatigue, being isolated from others, or loss which has occurred during this period.

Psychological First Aid techniques work the same as First Aid for a physical injury. The goal is the same in trying to stabilize the person in need and return their feeling for a sense of safety. As an example, if a person is terrified about going outside due to risk of contraction of the virus, this person could have these fears reduced by assurance of what activities are safe outdoors and sharing of the greater risk that can occur with self-isolation without any outdoor time. A first aid responder can help a person to feel confidence in their ability to make it through this difficult time, ability to meet basic needs and linkage to a mental health professional when needed. Psychological First Aid was used during both the SARS and Ebola pandemics and can be a good tool during the COVID-19 pandemic as well. This is an especially good time to brush off the Psychological First Aid skills as many are now feeling the stress and fatigue with the wait for their turn in line for the vaccine.

People can learn on review Psychological First Aid skills easily. John Hopkins University offers a [free course online](#) as shared by the California Behavioral Health Director's Association in a recently shared article on [Steps to Ease the Pandemic Mental Health Crisis](#). Practice extra patience with yourselves and with others. Together we will make it through this trying time.

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**.

Consumer and Family Member Action Team (CFMAT): The December CFMAT meeting started with a singing performance by the talented member, Joe Hettich. CFMAT continues to have robust conversations centered on the MHSA Community Planning Process, Help@Hand Project and Senate Bill 803- Peer Certification. Subcommittee leads provided updates regarding the CFMAT’s newsletter “Together in our Journey”, Pool of Champions efforts and ACCESS California update. Additionally, members shared upcoming events and trainings. CFMAT meets monthly on the Third Thursday from 1:00PM to 2:30PM via Zoom.

Crisis Action Team: The Crisis Action Team met recently and covered many area updates. West County Crisis Services has opened an office in the Champion’s Center in Lompoc. This is an ideal location, and the clinic will serve walk-ins as well as scheduled appointments.

In an effort to relieve hospital overcrowding during this recent spike in COVID-19 cases, the Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) is developing a plan to accept individuals placed on 5150 W&I holds directly from the field. The length of stay in hospital Emergency Departments while patients are awaiting placement to LPS facilities has decreased slightly this last month, which is welcomed news. Behavioral Wellness joined a productive meeting with Las Encinas Hospital last week and is expecting this facility to begin taking more of clients who are placed on 5150 holds, from Santa Barbara County.

The Santa Barbara Police Department (SBPD) Co-Response Officer will be able to dedicate himself full-time to the project beginning on Jan. 19th. Behavioral Wellness has selected a co-response mental health professional to work with one of the Sheriff’s Department officers, bringing the number of teams to four between the Sheriff’s Office and SBPD.

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 December meeting was held on the 3rd Wednesday due to the upcoming holiday and included another lively roundtable discussion and presentation by Behavioral Wellness’ partner, WellPath, highlighting their new Jail Based Competency Treatment (JBCT) program. WellPath was recognized by several stakeholders and partners for their valiant efforts in building out a separate unit in the Santa Barbara county jail designed to serve individuals, who would otherwise be sentenced to a state hospital for competency restoration due to the severity of their mental illnesses. The beneficial outcomes of the program are being attributed to the unit’s welcoming, homelike environment and therapeutic approach, tailored specifically to each individual’s needs. Behavioral Wellness also shared an update regarding the newly opened Champion’s Healing Center (CHC) in Lompoc, the county’s first Mental Health Rehabilitation Center (MHRC) facilitated by Crestwood for adults with severe and persistent mental illness, who are returning to Santa Barbara county from Institutions for Mental Disease (IMD) facilities.

The next Forensic Action Team Meeting is planned for **Wednesday, January 27th @ 1:30-3:00 pm**. Please contact Shana Burns, LMFT, Forensics Services Manager, at (805) 335-4263, with any questions, agenda suggestions, and/or if you would like to be added to the invite list.

NATIONAL AND STATE NEWS

Governor Newsom's Proposed FY 2021-22 State Budget: The California Behavioral Health Director's Association provided a recent analysis of the Governor's proposed FY 2021-22 State Budget. Governor Gavin Newsom's proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-22 State Budget allocates \$227.2 billion in total state spending, consisting of \$164 billion from the state General Fund (GF), \$58.3 billion from special funds and \$4.4 billion from bond funds. When federal financial participation (FFP) is included, Medi-Cal is by far the largest state program at \$117.9 billion in FY 2021-22. In this year's proposed budget, the state is experiencing a one-time \$15 billion surplus due to the difficult to predict impacts of the pandemic on revenues and expenditures. However, much of this surplus is proposed to be allocated as one-time funding, because the state forecasts ongoing structural general fund deficits in outyears (i.e., \$7.6 billion in FY 2022-23 growing to over \$11 billion by FY 2024-25).

Given the budget instability, the Administration also proposes continued investments in budget reserves totaling nearly \$22 billion between last year and the proposed FY 2021-22 budget. The Newsom Administration's January budget proposes a historic investment in the county behavioral health safety net and proposes an infusion of \$1 billion combined, largely in one-time spending intended to build out the delivery system capacity, particularly at the community level, and support the state's intention to eventually pursue the Medicaid Institutes of Mental Disease (IMD) waiver. This investment is one of several important contributions to county behavioral health and the individuals we serve, outlined in the sections below.

The proposed budget reflects a response to the growing system needs. The budget includes:

- A historic \$1 billion investment in the county behavioral health infrastructure
- Resources to support counties in implementing changes associated with CalAIM
- Funding for Board and Care
- An extension of MHSA relief

It is recognized that the budget process is still in its early stages and we look forward to additional information as it becomes available.

HHS Eliminates X-Waiver Requirement for DEA-Registered Physicians: Last week, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced new guidance to allow any physician with a DEA license to prescribe buprenorphine to patients for the treatment of opioid use disorder (OUD).

More than 83,000 drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States in the 12 months ending in June 2020, the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a 12-month period, and an increase of over 21% compared to the previous year, according to [recent provisional data](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The increase in overdose deaths highlights the need for treatment services to be more accessible for people most at risk of overdose and today's action will expand access to and availability of treatment for opioid use disorder.

Without MAT, the chances of relapse for a person who suffers from OUD are significant; studies have shown that outcomes for people with OUD are much better with MAT. The guidance, [Practice Guidelines for the Administration of Buprenorphine for Treating Opioid Use Disorder](#), would allow any physician with a DEA license to treat up to 30 in-state patients with buprenorphine. The guidance states:

- The exemption only applies to physicians who may only treat patients who are located in the states in which they are authorized to practice medicine.
- Physicians utilizing this exemption will be limited to treating no more than 30 patients with buprenorphine for opioid use disorder at any one time (note: the 30 patient cap does not apply to hospital-based physicians, such as Emergency Department physicians).
- The exemption applies only to the prescription of drugs or formulations covered under the X-waiver of the CSA, such as buprenorphine, and does not apply to the prescription, dispensation, or use of methadone for the treatment of OUD.
- Physicians utilizing this exemption shall place an "X" on the prescription and clearly identify that the prescription is being written for opioid use disorders (along with the separate maintaining of charts for patients being treated for OUD).
- An interagency working group will be established to monitor the implementation and results of these practice guidelines, as well as the impact on diversion.

Locally, since the start of the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS) which took place in December of 2018, Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) has taken root throughout Santa Barbara County. Local Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs) – Aegis Treatment Centers – of Santa Barbara and Santa Maria, now include buprenorphine (Suboxone) in addition to methadone. At any given time, 50 to 75 clients are receiving buprenorphine induction and medication services at local OTPs, while 600 to 700 are receiving methadone, at the same time. Two of the Behavioral Wellness contracted substance use disorder (SUD) outpatient treatment programs – LAGS and Coast Valley – provide a full range of “in-house” MAT services including medication prescription, administration and monitoring of all FDA approved medications besides methadone as well as behavioral treatments. In March of 2020, the Behavioral Wellness Alcohol and Drug Program (ADP) opened an in-house, office based, Buprenorphine Induction Clinic (OBIC) on the South County campus called the SUD Wellness and Recovery Access Point. This MAT access point provides buprenorphine induction, medication, stabilization and referral services to clients within the Crisis Hub or from the Access Line.

When not providing direct MAT services, Behavioral Wellness ADP also coordinates MAT services. ADP staff actively work with the South County Bridge Clinic at Cottage Hospital, the jail systems and a CenCal opioid project to identify and engage clients in MAT. Newly hired care coordinators ensure that clients who need MAT services are able to quickly access this treatment. Behavioral Wellness ADP is part of a statewide Opioid Safety Network that captures, aggregates, and analyzes significant data trends to inform direct service and prevention programming. This network is currently developing a county website to provide important data trends and resources to professionals and community members alike. Finally, Behavioral Wellness ADP has a robust and comprehensive Overdose Prevention and Reversal Program, in which over two thousand Narcan kits have been distributed, resulting in over 750 opioid reversals since December

2015. MAT will continue to expand and be integrated into all levels of substance use disorder prevention and treatment care in the future.

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