

# Director's Report

February 16, 2021



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## DEPARTMENT AND COUNTY NEWS

**County Behavioral Health Directors Applaud Priority Vaccine Access for Californians with Behavioral Health Disabilities:** After the state of California released new priority guidelines for COVID-19 vaccinations, the County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California (CBHDA) issued the following statement last week from Dr. Veronica Kelley, CBHDA President and San Bernardino County Behavioral Health Director and member of the Community Vaccine Advisory Committee.

“County behavioral health departments have a frontline view of the devastating impact of COVID-19 on Californians’ mental wellness and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on our behavioral health clients. We welcome today’s announcement that Californians whose disabilities place them at high risk of COVID-19 illness or death will be prioritized for vaccine access.

“Today’s action is firmly supported by research published in the [Journal of the American Medical Association](#) (JAMA) which found that schizophrenia is the second highest risk factor for COVID-19 death after age.

“County behavioral health departments look forward to partnering with the state’s vaccine distribution program to connect the most at-risk behavioral health clients to life-saving vaccines. Given the diverse population we serve, doing so will also support the state’s priority on equity in vaccine distribution.

“The isolation, fear and economic devastation of COVID-19 have taken a severe toll on Californians’ behavioral health; an effective and equitable vaccine program will support both public health and behavioral health for Californians.”

It is believed by CBHDA that given the recent study by JAMA Psychiatry noted above related to the high risk of COVID-19 related death for those with schizophrenia, paired with the criteria for outlined by the state for those with disabilities, that county behavioral health clients should meet the criteria for priority vaccines when they become available.

### **Study Finds Schizophrenia is the Second Highest Risk Factor for COVID-19 Death:**

The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) recently published a study on the association of psychiatric disorders with mortality among patients with COVID-19. The increased rate of people who are positive for COVID-19, among people with mental disorders, has been reported in at least 2 nationwide

cohort studies in the United States. Depression and schizophrenia were associated with the highest infection risk for COVID-19 in one of sample groups. It was noted that the association may be attributed to socioeconomic and environmental factors that contribute to exposure. Because outcomes may differ by diagnosis, this study recognized the importance of determining which patients positive with COVID-19, were at increased risk of adverse outcomes.

In the study, the prevalence of psychiatric disorders among all patients tested for COVID-19, and among those who tested positive, was first determined. There were over 7,000 people included in this study. The likelihood of a positive test result in each psychiatric diagnostic group was compared with a group of people without psychiatric disorders. The 45-day mortality outcome was then compared between each psychiatric diagnostic group and with the group without psychiatric disorders. Results showed that those with a diagnosis of schizophrenia had an increased chance of death after comparing age, sex, race and known medical risk factors. The likelihood of death in adults with mood disorders was not statistically relevant in comparison. There was also no significance in association between anxiety disorders and death. As noted in the above referenced article, the overall conclusion of this study confirms that schizophrenia is the second highest risk factor for COVID-19 death after age.

**Homekey South Opens in Lompoc with 16 Units for Those Experiencing Homelessness:** All units have now been filled for Homekey Studios. Homekey studios is a unique collaboration between the Santa Barbara County Department of Behavioral Wellness and the Santa Barbara County Housing Authority. Governor Newsom recently announced that all 94 Homekey projects have closed escrow and buildings that will provide critically needed housing units for people experiencing homelessness throughout California are underway.

The critical investments into these housing opportunities enables this high-risk population to follow public health guidance to slow the spread of COVID-19, using innovative approaches, such as converting temporary non-congregate housing, including hotels, motels, vacant apartment buildings and other properties, into permanent long-term housing for people experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. John Polansky, Director for Housing Development for the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Barbara states, "This was truly a team effort with so many partners involved including many Santa Barbara County departments." Polansky continues to say, "Those involved, included the County Executive Office, the Department of Behavioral Wellness, Community Services Department, Public Works, County Counsel, General Services as well as the City of Lompoc."

Homekey Studios will provide support for local residents who are struggling with employment, housing and the ability to ensure their physical safety with the spread of COVID-19 in our local community, to live independently. This unique collaboration was able to find a way to take advantage of this one-time state funding opportunity to provide housing for the homeless population vulnerable to COVID, and provide affordable housing during the pandemic. Big thank you to the Behavioral Wellness Outreach Teams who worked hard to identify and help move 16 people into this housing opportunity.

**Alcohol and Drug Program (ADP) Update:** There are several things to highlight this month, within the ADP programs of Behavioral Wellness. Behavioral Wellness Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP) has been awarded participation in three (3) learning collaboratives sponsored by Health Management Associates. Each learning collaborative seeks to assess current practices and improve system integrations

and care coordination by providing training and technical insight from outside learned professionals. The areas of focus will be improving alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment services with Child Welfare Services (CWS), integrating ADP with primary care and County Public Health, and linking justice-involved clients with co-occurring psychiatric and substance use disorders with SUD treatment once they are released from custody. We anticipate greater understanding and systems integration with each leaning collaborative.

Next, the yearly Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS) External Quality Review Organization (EQRO) went very well. Reviewers complimented the Behavioral Wellness ADP and QCM programs for constructing and monitoring an innovative, client centered system of care. Specifically, the substance use disorder (SUD) treatment system was notable for exceptional centralized access, high DMC penetration rates, successful treatment outcomes and positive Treatment Perception Survey results. System care coordination efforts were considered “cutting edge and our process improvement projects (PIPs) largely successful. Overall, EQRO reviewers found many more strengths than opportunities or weaknesses, and those opportunities were already areas that the system had begun to address and improve.

As part of a larger effort, led by [Carla Cross, LMFT, Behavioral Wellness Training Coordinator](#), ADP is providing regular and formal clinical supervision to Behavioral Wellness Alcohol and Drug Service Specialist (ADSS) or counselors. As Ms. Cross is providing clinical supervision training to therapists and therapist interns, ADP Management is doing the same for County Alcohol and Other Drug Counselors (AOD). Clinical supervision is now being considered an essential component of quality care, not only ensuring that clients receive the best possible services, but also so clinicians can reach their full potential and agencies can proceed with the highest level of ethical responsibility. ADSS/Counselor and Therapist clinical supervision will operate on parallel tracks, reinforce one another, and improve quality behavioral health care.

**New Behavioral Wellness Human Resources Manager Appointed:** Rey Guillen has accepted the position of Human Resources Manager for the Department of Behavioral Wellness. Rey transitioned to this new role on February 8th. He originally joined the Department on March 25, 2019 as Assistant Human Resources Manager, focusing on Employee Relations and Performance Management. Rey has more than 25 years of combined human resources experience with several California cities and counties. His previous employers have included the counties of Santa Clara, San Mateo and San Bernardino and the cities of Palo Alto and Santa Barbara. Rey attended school at the University of Redlands, School of Business. We wish Rey continued success with the Department in his new role.

**Leadership Opportunity for Transition Age Youth:** The Santa Barbara County Behavioral Wellness Commission is seeking Transition Age Youth (TAY), ages 16-25, to join the Commission as advocates in communicating youth needs to the Behavioral Wellness Department and the Board of Supervisors. The Behavioral Wellness Commission meets by ZOOM every 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday from 3 pm – 5 pm. For more information on the Behavioral Wellness Commission, please contact Karen Campos at [KCampos@sbcbswell.org](mailto:KCampos@sbcbswell.org) or call 805-681-5220. For more information on the Behavioral Wellness TAY programming, please click [here](#).

To receive more information on the application process on becoming a Transition Age Youth Behavioral Wellness Commissioner and serving as a link between your peers, local services and decision makers, please email Jan Winter at [wintercal@cox.net](mailto:wintercal@cox.net).

**Lompoc Regional Partnership Meeting:** The Lompoc Regional Partnership team last met on January 19, 2021 and included participants from Behavioral Wellness, Public Health and other local community partners. The team reviewed the local distribution plan COVID vaccinations for the community. Ashley Costa from the Lompoc Valley Healthcare Organization (LVCHO) is creating 150 COVID “kits” to distribute to residents who have tested positive. These packets include health information, resources and messages of hope. Behavioral Wellness presented current programs and services available for the community along with engagement strategies to reach clients who may have difficulty utilizing tele-health. The next meeting will take place via Zoom on March 16, 2021 from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm.

**Santa Barbara Regional Partnership Meeting:** The Children’s Regional Partnership meeting for Santa Barbara took place on January 21, 2021. The Santa Barbara Unified School District (SBUSD) coordinator of school climate and safety provided a presentation on school based mental health services. In addition, the outcomes of the 2019-2020 depression symptom screenings through use of the Patient Health Questionnaire Modified for Adolescents (PHQ-A), were shared and indicated a drop in reported depression symptoms from pre-test to post-test scores. Many services are in place with the aim of helping to provide support for students experiencing depression as well as other mental health challenges. Throughout the 2019-2020 school year, 221 students in the SBUSD received individual and/or group counseling including 4,688 informal sessions being help and a total of 575 parents/guardians participating in family services. School-based mental health services encourage a help-seeking culture, dispelling the stigma around mental health. Nearly, half (49%) of referrals received were student self-referrals (initiated by the student).

Despite many difficulties posed by the pandemic and distance learning, positive outcomes are still obtainable. Woven into the meeting discussion was the importance of creativity when contacting and supporting students and families. Creating new methods have proven to be effective; such as finding private spaces for telehealth, meeting in safe/convenient locations, and increasing communication with school staff to assist with student/family outreach.

An Adult Regional Partnership meeting did not take place in January. The next Adult Regional Partnership meeting will take place on February 22, 2021 from 10 am – 11am via ZOOM. For questions, please contact Veronica Heinzelmann at [vheinzelmann@co.santa-barbara.ca.us](mailto:vheinzelmann@co.santa-barbara.ca.us).

**Change Agents:** The January Change Agent meeting had strong attendance and lively discussion about current PDSAs. The Calle Real Adult Clinic recently got easels and artwork for their lobby to further their goal of showcasing client and community artwork and make their lobby more inviting. If you know of artists who would like an opportunity to have their work displayed, please contact John Strahan at [jstrahan@sbcbswell.org](mailto:jstrahan@sbcbswell.org). The Juvenile Justice team was recently trained to administer the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) to screen youth entering juvenile hall for substance use and refer them to services. Several clinics are pursuing interventions aimed at strengthening client and staff connectedness to combat social isolation during COVID. The next Change Agent meeting is scheduled to take place on

Wednesday, February 24<sup>th</sup> from 9 am – 11 am and will include clinic supervisors and managers and presentations of current PDSA projects. For technical assistance with data analyses on PDSA projects, please contact Caitlin Lepore at [clepore@sbcbswell.org](mailto:clepore@sbcbswell.org). Please submit your PDSA project slides for the upcoming meeting to Janal Lopez at [janlopez@sbcbswell.org](mailto:janlopez@sbcbswell.org) by end of business on Tuesday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Childrens System of Care (CSOC) Action Team:** The most recent CSOC meeting took place on January 28, 2021. This meeting continued its focus on target areas including Youth of Color, Criteria for Services, Access to Care, Engagement, Safety, and Resiliency. Themes from previous meetings continued as a focus. These include the need for more substance abuse support in programs and services integrated within the community for youth who have a dual diagnosis of mental health and substance abuse needs. Also, the need for a youth advisory council and the continued need to strengthen integrated care within local schools. The next meeting will take place on February 25, 2021.

**Consumer and Family Member Action Team (CFMAT):** The January meeting began with a poem being read by author Sandy Rives, written for the 2020 Journal of Diverse Minds entitled, “Still Small Voice.” The meeting followed with updates provided by the Help@Hand team who shared their facilitation of the peer run support groups at the Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF) and their work with the new Process Improvement Project (PIP). This new PIP looks at the warm handoff process and assigns clinic base peers to discharged clients to encourage the success of follow-up appointments. Also, the team discussed the focus on the second target population, Transitional Age Youth (TAY), in creating “TAY Listening Sessions” to gain input that will assist in creating curriculum for TAY support groups. Members were provided subcommittee updates regarding SB 803-Peer Certification, the CFMAT Newsletter, a flyer for the recruitment of TAY representation on the Behavioral Wellness Commission and CFMAT’s first annual “Empowerment Conference” that will occur on May 27, 2021. In addition, **Lindsay Walter, Deputy Director of Operations and MHSA Chief** engaged the members as MHSA Community Planning Process advisors, in obtaining feedback regarding the MHSA Community Planning Process.

**Crisis Action Team:** The Crisis Action Team met on February 11<sup>th</sup>. Many items were discussed, including the time patients on involuntary psychiatric holds are waiting in hospitals to be transferred to LPS designated facilities. This number is continuing to decrease. Important to note that the number of patients in our hospital emergency departments can increase or decrease quickly and unpredictably. The added challenge of patients who are experiencing a psychiatric emergency and in need of acute psychiatric hospitalizations, and are also positive for COVID-19 continues as a challenge.

An update was provided on the Champion Center in Lompoc. Several patients from the Psychiatric Housing Facility (PHF) have been able to transition to the Champion Center which has helped ease overcrowding at hospital emergency departments. In the same effort of reducing overcrowding in emergency departments, the Behavioral Wellness Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) has begun accepting patients on 5150 holds, in addition to regular voluntary referrals.

The county’s co-response program continues to expand and is grateful for the level of positive community support. The Crisis Action Team meets the second Thursday of each month from 2:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

**Cultural Competency and Diversity Action Team (CCDAT):** The continues to meet monthly on every 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday. At the January meeting, CCDAT members were provided an update by the Help@Hand team on the peer run support groups at the psychiatric health facility. Discussion took place on the new Process improvement Project (PIP), Warm Handoff, a new non-clinical Performance Improvement project. This project assigns clinic base peers to discharged clients to encourage the success of follow-up appointments. Additionally, guest speaker Jessica Foster and Kiana Kates from American Indian Health discussed the services offered by this organization. Clients, community members, and staff are invited to the upcoming “Culture as Prevention” workshops. Furthermore, members were able to share their feedback and input on the new design for the Cultural Competency web-page. Finally, the new subcommittee called, “Building Resilient Communities” was explored. This subcommittee meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month from 9:00 am - 10:00 am and focuses on information exchange and networking aimed at increasing mental health awareness in accessing services, de-stigmatizing mental health, and building a network of Spanish speaking support groups. Please help to spread the word in encouraging consumers and family members to join this action team. CCDAT meets monthly the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of each month from 10 am – 11:30 am via ZOOM. For questions or more information, please contact Maria Arteaga at 805-681-5208 or [marteaga@co.santa-barbara.ca.us](mailto:marteaga@co.santa-barbara.ca.us) or Anthony Hollenback at 805-737-6610 or [ahollenback@co.santa-barbara.ca.us](mailto:ahollenback@co.santa-barbara.ca.us).

**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 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays @ 1:30-3:00 pm (via Zoom). January’s meeting focused on 2020 highlights and successes; the recent opening of B Street Housing in Lompoc through Project Home Key; a 2020 retrospective shared by NAMI; and, the start of the action team’s visionary goal-setting for 2021. The next Forensic Action Team Meeting is planned for Wednesday, February 24<sup>th</sup> @ 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 action team invite list

## NATIONAL AND STATE NEWS

**National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month:** January was first declared as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month in 2010. Since then, January has been a time to acknowledge those experiencing enslavement and those who have escaped. Although slavery is commonly thought to be a thing of the past, human traffickers generate hundreds of billions of dollars in profits by trapping millions of people in horrific situations around the world, including here in the U.S. Traffickers use violence, threats, deception, debt bondage, and other manipulative tactics to force people to engage in commercial sex or to provide labor or services against their will.

The Santa Barbara County Human Trafficking Task Force promoted a number of community events last month to raise awareness. Included in these events was a two-part training on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children 101, facilitated by Behavioral Wellness, which was attended by over 115 participants throughout the two parts, combined. Participants included Behavioral Wellness staff, organizational providers and resource parents. To learn more about upcoming events and get more

information on Human Trafficking in Santa Barbara County, please visit [www.traffickSTOPsb.org](http://www.traffickSTOPsb.org). Local and National resource information is noted below:

**Child Welfare Hotline: 1-800-367-0166**

**Santa Barbara County Behavioral Wellness 24/7 ACCESS line: 1-888-868-1649**

**North County Rape Crisis or STESA (*Standing Together to End Sexual Assault*): 24/7 Hotline 805-564-3696**

**National Human Trafficking Hotline: 888-373-7888**

**BeFree Textline: Text "[BeFree](https://www.befree.org)" (233733)**

**National Center for Missing & Exploited Children: 1-800-843-5678 or visit [www.cybertipline.com](http://www.cybertipline.com)**

**National Runaway Hotline: 800-621-4000**

<http://www.greyhound.com/> Runaway Transportation Services will provide transportation home on Greyhound, free of charge, for runaway children of indigent families. The child's parents must go to their police department and have the police contact Greyhound with the information. Greyhound will then issue a ticket with the child's name, to the appropriate bus station, to be picked up by the child. The child must be 21 years or younger. However, children under 15 years of age cannot travel on their own. In such a case, Greyhound will issue a free round-trip ticket for a parent to retrieve the child and escort him or her home.

**Victim Witness: 805-737-7910 or Toll Free: 855-840-3233.**

**Online Safety <https://justiceco.org/onlinesafety/>**

**February is Black History Month:** Many ask the question of why Black History Month takes place in the month of February. The relevance of February goes back to 1926, when Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the founder for the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), first established "Negro History Week" during the second week of February. And why that week? Because it encompasses the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass—both men being great American symbols of freedom.

Black History Month is a federally recognized celebration of the contributions that African American people have made to our country and is a time to reflect on the continued struggle for racial justice. Black History Month for 2021 somehow feels different than recent years past. We began our year with a pandemic which impacted black people uniquely from others. Systemic inequities have been magnified this year with police involved killings which called the world to the streets, wearing masks, to be heard. At a time of our history when we so badly need to work together, to make it through, we simply cannot afford to be divided. We are in an important chapter in history, one that is filled with transition. Filled with tensions and with hope. COVID vaccinations are available and soon our community will be safely vaccinated and bringing much hope to many. How do we move forward from here in the face of systemic inequities? We move through. And we do so together, with compassion and patience.

## **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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:vheinzelmann@co.santa-barbara.ca.us).
- **Santa Maria Children’s Regional Partnership Meeting** is held every 3<sup>rd</sup> 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:marteaga@co.santa-barbara.ca.us) or Anthony Hollenback at 805-737-6610 or [ahollenback@co.santa-barbara.ca.us](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:ahollenback@co.santa-barbara.ca.us)
- **Forensic Action Team** will be meeting every other month on the 4<sup>th</sup> 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. For questions or Zoom log in information, please contact Shana Burns at [sburns@co.santa-barbara.ca.us](mailto:sburns@co.santa-barbara.ca.us) or Celeste Andersen at [candersen@sbcbswell.org](mailto:candersen@sbcbswell.org)