



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES CONTINUUM OF CARE KEY PROJECT UPDATES

September 27, 2022

Under the leadership of the San Diego Board of Supervisors (Board), behavioral health care in San Diego County is in the midst of a profound transformation. The County of San Diego (County) is taking action and making strategic investments to move the local behavioral health care delivery system from a model of care driven by crises to one centered on continuous, coordinated care and prevention. These efforts, broadly referred to as the Behavioral Health Continuum of Care (Continuum of Care), are guided by data, focused on equity, and designed to engender collaborative work across silos, within and outside of government. All Continuum of Care capital projects are designed thoughtfully to be a welcoming environment that is conducive to wellness and healing for the individuals and families who visit.

Today's update to the Board includes the following summary of progress of the portfolio of Continuum of Care projects that are bringing this transformation to life reported within the **domains of Crisis and Diversionary Services; Inpatient Hubs and Care Coordination; and Residential and Long-Term Care.**

Diversionary Services

Regional Crisis Stabilization Units

On March 26, 2019 (2), the Board approved a recommendation to establish regional mental health crisis stabilization units (CSUs) that provide 24/7 walk-in mental health and substance use disorder services for those in behavioral health crisis. Services in these CSUs include law enforcement drop-offs as a safe alternative to a jail or hospital, psychiatric services, medication, peer support, and transition planning, with stays of less than 24 hours.

Since the last update to the Board on May 4, 2021 (11), the North Coastal Community-Based CSU in Vista became operational on October 1, 2021, as did the North Coastal Live Well Health Center Community-Based CSU in Oceanside which open its doors on April 25, 2022, bringing the total number of County-funded CSUs to six. Since becoming operational through September 4, 2022:

- The Vista CSU has had over 2,800 admissions, 29% were referred through law enforcement, and of clients admitted 81% were referred to appropriate treatment services. Of the clients served, 43% were ages 26-39, 50% were White, and 28% of clients self-reported as homeless at the time of admission.

- The Oceanside CSU has had over 500 admissions, 35% were referred through law enforcement, and of clients admitted 79% were referred to appropriate treatment services. Of the clients served, 39% were ages 26-39, 55% were White, and 30% of clients self-reported as homeless at the time of admission.

On April 10, 2022, the Oceanside Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) project was selected for Project of the Year Award in the Structures category by the American Public Works Association (APWA). Following the award, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held on April 18 to mark the County of San Diego's commitment to make mental health and substance use services a priority.

New Community-Based CSU in East Region with Co-located Sobering Services

On October 19, 2021 (3), the Board directed a series of actions focused on creating alternatives to incarceration, and on February 8, 2022 (11), a preliminary report on data-driven alternatives to incarceration was presented to the Board with initial recommendations, including strategies to support alternatives to incarceration and connections to services for people with substance use, alcohol, and public conduct-related non-violent misdemeanor charges. The Board also authorized the Chief Administrative Officer to explore further integration of substance use and mental health services, including sobering services, in future crisis stabilization units.

On June 28, 2022 (5), the Board authorized a competitive solicitation for the procurement of community-based crisis stabilization services with co-located sobering services in the East Region. The East Region Community-Based CSU site has been chosen in the city of El Cajon. The project is currently in the programming phase with services estimated to begin Fall 2024. When operational, this facility will up to 16 CSU recliners along with sobering services.

Today's action authorizes the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting to advertise and award a Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) contract for development of the East Region CSU with co-located sobering services capital project. Funds totaling \$1.0 million are included in the Fiscal Year 2022-24 CAO Adopted Operational Plan. The department will return to the Board with future recommendations and to establish additional appropriations for future phases of the project.

To support the capital costs for this project, BHS plans to apply for Round 5: Crisis Continuum of the Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP) grant funding when the Request for Application (RFA) opens later this calendar year and return to the Board at a future date if funding is awarded.

Mobile Crisis Response Teams

On June 25, 2019 (1), the Board approved a recommendation to enhance the crisis intervention options available to the community by establishing a non-law enforcement Mobile Crisis Response Teams (MCRT) pilot program, in coordination with the County's Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Services, the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, and the San Diego County District Attorney, with initial efforts focused in the North Coastal Region. On June 23, 2020 (26), the Board expanded MCRT by approving an expedited rollout

of MCRTs countywide; and on April 6, 2021 (9), the Board further affirmed their commitment to strengthen MCRT by approving recommendations for a public awareness campaign, outreach to key stakeholders for continued engagement, and other key actions.

MCRT services are designed to help people who are experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis by dispatching behavioral health experts to emergency calls instead of law enforcement, when appropriate, with teams dispatched primarily by calls made to the Access and Crisis Line (888-724-7240) though law enforcement agencies can also refer calls they receive to MCRT. See below for key updates since the last update presented to the Board on June 30, 2022.

MCRT Key Data Points

Since the MCRT program launched in January 2021 through September 4, 2022:

- MCRT has responded to over 2,600 calls referred through the Access and Crisis Line (ACL) and Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA). Of the calls responded to, 765 referrals were received directly from LEA.
- Of the individuals who received an MCRT service, approximately 53% were stabilized in the field with referrals to ongoing care and without the need for additional transport, reducing the need for law enforcement services and utilization of more expensive, and acute services.
- Approximately 30% were ages 26-39, 45% were White, 28% were Hispanic, and 11% were Black/African American.
- Approximately 17% of clients self-reported that they were homeless at the time of assessment.
- Approximately 19% either refused a service or had left the location by the time MCRT arrived. On these occasions, MCRT still provided resources to the individual or family members who may be receptive to services in the future.

Stakeholder Engagement

On July 7, 2022, an update was provided to the Behavioral Health Advisory Board from a panel of program staff and law enforcement providing updates on 9-1-1 dispatchers who refer calls to MCRT. On August 15, 2022, an update on key MCRT program data was presented to the Human Relations Commission. BHS and MCRT program staff continue to be responsive to requests for information and interviews.

In a parallel effort, the County continues community-based outreach and engagement through a contract with Jewish Family Service's Breaking Down Barriers program. Breaking Down Barriers is a prevention and early intervention program providing outreach and education to reduce stigma around mental illness through trusted community partners.

Since March 2022 through September 5, the program has reached over 6,642 community members through outreach events, presentations, community conversations, flyer dissemination, posters placed in community locations, outreach to local businesses and social marketing. In addition, the program and its partners have distributed MCRT information at 175 community locations including libraries, food distribution centers, parks, businesses, resource

fairs, organization and community meetings, and cultural festivals. The MCRT flyers used to support this effort are available in multiple threshold languages, have been disseminated by the contractor and can also be found on the [MCRT website](#); stakeholders are being encouraged to reference and print as needed for their individual outreach efforts.

Media Campaign Update

A general media campaign was launched as live in market from January 31, 2022 to May 29, 2022, with an initial objective to inform and educate San Diegans about this valuable new program. The campaign reached people of all ages in San Diego County and included messaging in various languages (English, Spanish, Farsi, Arabic, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Chinese) to broaden the delivery of the message.

Through a multimedia approach that included out-of-home ads (billboards and place-based posters), radio ads, digital ads, and search ads, the campaign delivered over 91M impressions across San Diego County which indicates success in promoting awareness of the MCRT service. Moreover, the campaign received 13.3M engagements which indicates the target audience interacted with the campaign's message to learn more. Among the various media channels, each channel met or exceeded its respective benchmark goal for a successful media campaign.

Based on the performance of this initial campaign, additional public messaging is planned for the remainder of FY2022-23. BHS will work with its media contractor to expand media to include print ads, over-the-top TV (OTT), connected TV (CTV), social media ads, and bus shelter ads to reach even more San Diegans throughout the County and ensure they are aware of the services MCRT provides. Media channels previously leveraged for the first phase of messaging, such as radio, place-based print materials, and digital ads, will continue to be activated. Subsequent phases of the campaign will incorporate input received by the department through a series of community conversations and focus group discussions with stakeholders. Messaging will be tailored to better resonate and reflect groups with a shared community identity, as well as incorporate best practices and lessons learned from recent public communication on the SARS-CoV-2 virus. With the goal of reaching the most vulnerable, underserved, and/or unserved populations, strategies and related materials to promote the MCRT program will continue to evolve as education and outreach efforts transform to meet changing communication preferences of the community.

988 Launch – New Option for Behavioral Health Crisis Care

In 2020, Congress designated the new 988 dialing code to operate across the country. In July 2022, the U.S. transitioned to using the 988-dialing code, an easy to remember number that directly links someone in a behavioral health related crisis to immediate care and support. Locally, when someone with a San Diego area code dials 988, they will be seamlessly connected to the Access and Crisis Line and a trained counselor.

Over time, the vision for 988 is to have additional crisis services available in communities across the nation, much the way emergency medical services work. In the short-term, efforts are focused on strengthening and expanding the current crisis call center infrastructure and

capacity to ensure trained crisis counselors are available to quickly respond to 988 via call (multiple languages), text or chat (English only). In the longer term, the vision is to build a robust crisis care response system across the country that links callers to community-based providers who can deliver a full range of crisis care services.

The County is working closely with the BHS Administrative Services Organization and behavioral health crisis services providers on the planning and implementation phases in alignment with the vision. BHS is ensuring the capacity to respond to calls received and availability of local crisis resources, as well as the development of internal technological infrastructure to support the long-term goals. Information on 988 was added to the [BHS website](#), paired with the Access and Crisis Line information, with clarification between these two resources.

Inpatient Hubs and Care Coordination

Tri-City Psychiatric Healthcare Facility

In a series of actions to meet the urgent behavioral health needs in North San Diego County, the Board approved final agreements January 14, 2020 (11) between the County and Tri-City for the development and operation of a 16-bed psychiatric healthcare facility on vacant land located at the Tri-City Medical Center campus in Oceanside. In February 2022, community engagement efforts were conducted to solicit community input on the project before the submission of the plans to the Oceanside City Planning Commission, which was approved unanimously at their meeting on June 13, 2022.

On December 7, 2021 (26) the Board approved a \$3.2 million increase to the budget for the Tri-City PHF projected bringing the total estimated project cost to \$20,600,000. Construction of the project is anticipated to begin Fall 2022 and be completed by late 2023. A groundbreaking event is being planned for this Fall.

Edgemoor Acute Psychiatric Unit

On August 16, 2022 (7) the Board approved authorization to accept one-time Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP) Round 3: Launch Ready grant funding in the amount of approximately \$12.4 million to fund the construction of the 12-bed acute psychiatric facility located within the existing Edgemoor Distinct Part Skilled Nursing Facility (DPSNF) campus. Initially, the total estimated cost of this project is approximately \$13.4 million, inclusive of \$12.4 million funded by BHCIP Launch Ready Grant and \$1.0 million County match requirement funded by Realignment.

Construction of this new acute psychiatric unit will allow residents to continue to receive the appropriate specialty psychiatric care without requiring them to transfer out of their residence. The new facility will serve residents countywide as needed but will increase accessibility to vulnerable individuals within the East Region, which currently has limited behavioral health infrastructure. The acute psychiatric unit may also be able to serve other area skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) with patients in need of stabilization, thus reducing the need to transport these

patients to hospital emergency rooms. The acute psychiatric unit will also provide local connections to inpatient services for those requiring higher levels of care.

The County's Department of General Services and an independent architect, with the guidance of OSHPD liaisons, are assisting with a review of options to meet design requirements for this type of facility. The project is currently in the design phase, with construction is scheduled to begin in 2023, and slated for completion early 2025. This project, along with the Crisis Stabilization Unit with co-located sobering services in East Region (El Cajon), will bolster the region's psychiatric capacity while maintaining Edgemoor's DP licensure.

Alvarado Inpatient Acute Psychiatric Services

On August 30, 2022 (16) the Board approved recommendations to enter into a contract with Alvarado Hospital for Medi-Cal managed care inpatient acute psychiatric services and emergency psychiatric and crisis stabilization services. The actions requested will enable an increase in regional capacity by adding up to 44 new dedicated psychiatric acute inpatient beds for individuals who are Medi-Cal eligible, along with EPU/CSU services to improve access to critical inpatient and stabilization services for vulnerable adults countywide who are experiencing a behavioral health crisis.

This action will also result in estimated one-time costs of approximately \$3.0 million for the initial architectural design related to facility improvements in Fiscal Year 2022-23. The total County investment for facility improvements, inclusive of the initial design costs, is estimated at approximately \$28.0 million and will be refined as the design work progresses based on the County's share as outlined through a revenue sharing agreement that is based on the final number of dedicated psychiatric acute inpatient beds for Medi-Cal eligible individuals, and emergency psychiatric and crisis stabilization beds.

This collaboration with Alvarado Hospital will also involve medical oversight and leverage academic leadership from University of California San Diego (UCSD) Health and the UCSD Department of Psychiatry and it aligns with the principles of behavioral health hubs articulated in previous actions brought before this Board. This collaboration with Alvarado Hospital is a unique opportunity to advance the behavioral health continuum of care in a relatively expeditious manner and aligns with the principles of ongoing behavioral health hub work across the region.

Establishing the Central Region Behavioral Health Hub at Alvarado Hospital also provides a unique opportunity to shift service arrays within the San Diego County Psychiatric Hospital and the County-owned Third Avenue property, briefly outlined below.

Third Avenue and San Diego County Psychiatric Hospital Updates

On October 29, 2019 (31), the Board was informed that development of a vacant, County-owned parcel of land located on Third Avenue, San Diego, was feasible for a variety of mental health services. Based on the establishment of the Central Region Hub at Alvarado Hospital and due to the urgent need identified across the region, BHS will bring forward

recommendations at a future Board meeting to reimagine the Third Avenue property, which will include establishing community-based care capacity.

Additionally, the collaborative efforts with Alvarado described above will enable the County to shift acute inpatient care provision from the San Diego County Psychiatric Hospital (SDCPH), an Institution of Mental Disease (IMD) revenue-excluded facility, to Alvarado, a General Acute Care Hospital, allowing the County to realize operational efficiencies and optimize available revenues. Shifting acute inpatient care to Alvarado Hospital uniquely situates the County with an opportunity to establish new subacute services within the SDCPH. BHS will also bring forward recommendations for the new array of services at the SDCPH facility at a future Board meeting.

Hospital Rates and Incentive Development

- **Acute Psychiatric Inpatient Services**

In a collaboration with providers, BHS has implemented new value-based reimbursement approaches for inpatient services which includes the development of baseline per-diem rate(s) and establishing additional incentive-based payment opportunities. Shifting toward value-based reimbursement for behavioral health services ahead of planned, statewide reimbursement changes under California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) will help San Diego County effectively prepare for – and keep pace with – changes happening across California and nationally. Value-based reimbursement represents a paradigm shift in the way providers operate.

BHS is advancing value-based reimbursement by utilizing a base rate plus the potential to earn additional dollars if a provider is able to achieve certain outcomes related to the improvement of client care. The base rate is the minimum reimbursement amount that the provider will be paid and has been developed for several services, including hospital acute psychiatric inpatient care, based on actual provider costs, modifiers due to projected inflation, and other publicly available data from CMS cost reports.

BHS has completed extensive initial research and modeling to understand the impact of these payments and will continue working closely with the provider community to define performance measures and associated goals for these incentive payments. The chosen measures will support broader goals to improve behavioral health for San Diego and may include efforts to expand access, better coordinate care, and help people maintain recovery.

- **Naloxone Distribution in Hospitals**

The Continuum of Care strategy aims to promote population health efforts at hospitals that will improve behavioral health outcomes in the community. An immediate priority is to reduce morbidity and mortality related to opioid use disorder. To achieve this aim, BHS implemented rate enhancements at participating hospitals in July 2022 (i.e., increases in the administrative day rate established by the State of California for acute care psychiatric services) for participation in two population health qualifying activities: Department of Health Care Services' Naloxone Distribution Project (NDP); and CA

<p>Bridge. Organizations participating in the NDP dispense naloxone directly to patients who are at risk of experiencing or witnessing an overdose prior to discharge. Organizations participating in CA Bridge offer the following services through emergency departments: medications for addiction treatment (buprenorphine), support from a peer navigator, and a warm handoff to community partners. As of September 1, 2022, a total of nine (9) San Diego County hospitals have signed on to participate in the population health activities (all nine of these hospitals will be participating in the NDP; 7 will also be participating in CA Bridge).</p>
<p>Long-Term Care</p>
<p><i>Step-Down and Long-Term Care Investments</i></p> <p>As detailed in the main body of the Board Letter, BHS is proposing actions to redefine and transform long-term care in San Diego County through the development of a new OCP model designed to establish new care pathways that better meet the needs of individuals through community-based care, along with a focus on services that divert individuals from unnecessary utilization of acute care.</p> <p>Through a broad and comprehensive analysis, the model has determined an optimal future state that is required to support people who continue to lack options for placement due to complex needs, lack of existing services, inadequate capacity, and/or other barriers to care. To achieve this optimal future state, capacity across the system must more than double and be recalibrated to focus on growth across the following three lower levels of care service domains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community crisis diversion • Subacute services • Community-based care <p>The impact of building capacity across these three service domains as outlined in the optimal state is anticipated to result in a substantial decrease in acute inpatient services and will connect people to the care they need in the least restrictive setting.</p>
<p>Children and Youth Behavioral Health Continuum of Care Updates</p>
<p><i>Children's Behavioral Health Hub</i></p> <p>On March 10, 2020 (4), the Board approved actions to begin the process of evaluating and potentially developing a behavioral health hub in North Central Region in partnership with Rady Children's Hospital (Rady) which would provide an array of services designed to meet the needs children and youth. Services for this hub may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inpatient and acute care services • Crisis stabilization services • Partial hospitalization • Care coordination services <p>Since the update on May 4, 2021 (11), the land use feasibility study has been completed and additional actions to move toward building design and permitting approvals are underway.</p>

Planning, in partnership with Rady, to define the service array for the Children’s Hub is also underway. Construction is estimated to begin in 2025.

Screening to Care

On June 8, 2021 (3), San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) approved a final American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding framework to support the residents of San Diego County. The approved funding framework included the use of ARPA funding to address the behavioral health services needs of children, youth and families which were identified as high priority.

On December 7, 2021, the U.S. Surgeon General issued an Advisory on Protecting Youth Mental Health (Advisory) to highlight the urgent need to address the nation’s youth mental health crisis. The Advisory called for a swift and coordinated response to this crisis as the nation continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic and provided the following recommendations that individuals, families, community organizations, technology companies, governments, and others can take to improve the mental health of children, adolescents, and young adults.

To advance recommendations outlined in the Advisory, and in alignment with other efforts to support youth, the *Screening to Care* initiative was created to address mental health treatment needs for middle school students in partnership with the San Diego County School Board Association and school districts across the county with services that will use a multi-tiered approach which includes universal screening of students facilitated by middle school staff, regardless of the child’s insurance status.

Based on the screening results, students will be stratified into three different tiers of intervention: school community and classroom-based intervention which is known as Tier 1; small group intervention which is known as Tier 2; and referral to treatment level services known as Tier 3 which will leverage the BHS-operated SchoolLink programs. These services are aimed at preventing more severe behavioral health conditions seen among high school students, and will attend to addressing stigma, promote acceptance, empathy, and compassion and be delivered in a culturally competent manner in alignment with BHS’ long-term commitment to creating and maintaining a culturally relevant and culturally responsive system of care.

Expansion to elementary and high school students shall be determined as service effectiveness is evaluated. *Screening to Care* services will be initially funded through ARPA funding for three years, with plans to explore funding opportunities to sustain the program on a long-term basis.

Complementing the *Screening to Care* initiative are additional strategies that further advance behavioral health care for children and youth, outlined in the section below.

Parks After Dark

In partnership with the City of San Diego Parks and Recreation, the Parks After Dark program occurred throughout July and August with outdoor family programming to promote wellness and health of community members. Tenets of this community-based program were built on the foundation that connects physical and social community interaction to promote confidence, sense of responsibility, while building self-image and instilling hope and positive connections.

Additional Updates in Support of Continuum of Care Efforts

Behavioral Health Impact Fund

On April 7, 2020 (3), the Board, in partnership with the City of San Diego (City), established a Behavioral Health Impact Fund (BHIF) with appropriations of \$25 million for capital projects to support community-based behavioral health organizations in increasing their capacity to support long-term treatment. One-time funds for capital projects through a competitive procurement process will strengthen the regional Continuum of Care.

The BHIF request for proposal (RFP) was issued in May 2020, inviting offerors to submit proposals for capital funds to support the following critical service areas:

- Licensed adult residential facilities, also known as board and care facilities;
- Temporary and transitional housing and support for people with substance use disorders consistent with recovery residence settings;
- Residential mental health treatment services, including crisis residential programs for homeless populations and transition age youth;
- Residential substance use disorder treatment programs, inclusive of withdrawal management and detoxification services;
- Other temporary and transitional housing for homeless populations with behavioral health needs that may include a focus on youth who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation; and,
- Information technology to support telehealth, data integration and innovation to optimize access and care for individuals with behavioral health care needs.

On March 29, 2022, the County issued notices of intent to award BHIF projects as outlined on the County's Department of Purchasing and Contracting [website](#). Among these projects is a \$12M award to McAlister Institute for Treatment and Education (MITE) to purchase and renovate a facility in the City of San Diego to provide residential substance use disorder beds, inclusive of withdrawal management and enhanced with medical services including medication assisted treatment.