

COUNTY
of SAN LUIS
OBISPO

INCLUSION AND BELONGING CIRCULAR

APRIL - JUNE 2025



BEHAVIORAL
HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Program: Our Shared Journey

In our dedicated journey towards creating a more inclusive and understanding community, the County of San Luis Obispo Behavioral Health Department's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Program stands as a beacon of commitment to progress. We are wholeheartedly committed to fostering cultural humility at all organizational and service levels. Our mission transcends beyond awareness; it is about actively engaging in respect, access, empowerment, and understanding the diverse tapestry of individuals, cultures, ethnic groups, genders, gender identities and expressions, sexualities, abilities, veteran statuses, spiritual affiliations, and linguistic backgrounds that enrich our community.

We are enthusiastic about leading, developing, enhancing, and maintaining a culturally aware workforce, shaping policies, services, and programs that not only embrace but celebrate our community's diversity. Our focused efforts are dedicated to ensuring improved healthcare outcomes for every individual, honoring their unique identities and experiences.

In line with our vision of making diversity, equity, and inclusion the foundational values of our behavioral health services and management operations, we are excited to share our 'Inclusion & Belonging Circular.' This quarterly publication will be a cornerstone in our collective journey towards well-being. It will highlight vital information, resources, and services within our community, supporting us all on this path of inclusive excellence.

Through the 'Inclusion & Belonging Circular' and our ongoing efforts, we aspire to build an environment where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued, and where the well-being of each individual is our shared responsibility. Enjoy!

MATT'S MESSAGE

MESSAGE TOPIC:

REFLECTING ON OUR ALL-STAFF DEVELOPMENT DAY



I hope this message finds you well and still feeling the positive energy from our recent All-Staff Development Day! This day was more than just a gathering it was a meaningful opportunity for us to connect, reflect, and strengthen the foundation of inclusion and belonging in our department.

One of the most impactful moments of the day was our collective exploration of bias and microaggressions during our table discussions. The RIR Protocol (Recognize, Interrupt, Repair) stood out as a crucial tool that can enhance our communication—both in clinical and non-clinical settings. This straightforward yet powerful framework, empowers us to navigate difficult conversations with confidence, address biases in real time, and foster a workplace culture where every voice is acknowledged, respected, and valued.

Recognize: Acknowledging when something is said or done that may cause harm, whether intentional or not.

Interrupt: Speaking up in the moment to prevent further harm and create space for dialogue.

Repair: Taking steps to rebuild trust, reflect on our impact, and ensure that learning leads to action.

The RIR Protocol is more than a framework, it's a practice that strengthens our ability to communicate with care, foster accountability, and create a culture where everyone can thrive. I encourage each of us to integrate it into our daily interactions, whether in team meetings, client conversations, or moments of self- reflection.

A Personal Reflection & Next Steps

This day had a profound impact on me personally. Seeing so many of you engage in honest, courageous conversations reinforced why this work matters. It's easy to talk about inclusion and belonging in theory, but putting it into practice, especially in moments of discomfort, takes intention and commitment. Watching our team embrace the RIR Protocol and share their experiences reminded me that we are not just colleagues; we are a community working toward something bigger than ourselves.

Because of the overwhelmingly positive response, I am committed to providing follow-up trainings throughout the year to deepen our understanding and application of the RIR Protocol. These sessions will give us the opportunity to practice real-life scenarios, strengthen our confidence in using the framework, and continue building a workplace culture where psychological safety and belonging are the norm, not the exception.

Thank you to everyone who participated with openness and commitment. Our work is not always easy, but it is essential. Together, we are shaping a department that truly embodies inclusion and belonging not just in words, but in action.

Let's keep the momentum going! If you have any reflections or ideas from the Staff Development Day that you'd like to share, I'd love to hear them.

With appreciation,
Matt

All-Staff Development Day

Thank you for coming together to learn, grow, and strengthen our team!

We gathered all of your appreciation post it notes and transformed them into a word cloud a visual celebration of US and the incredible journey we're on together. Let this be a reminder of the values, support, and shared commitment that make our team so special!



April 2025

Diversity Month

South West Asian North African

Heritage Month

April 7th: World Health Day

April 2nd: World Autism Day

April 22nd: Earth Day

April 24th: Armenian Genocide

Remembrance Day

DIVERSITY MONTH

Let's talk Equity, Inclusion and Belonging!

In today's America, the need for equity, inclusion, and belonging in Behavioral Health is more critical than ever. These are not just abstract principles—they are essential to delivering high-quality care that meets the needs of our diverse communities. Behavioral Health services must reflect the individuals and families we serve, ensuring that people of all backgrounds feel seen, valued, and supported. When we center equity in our work, we improve client outcomes, build stronger teams, and foster trust with those who rely on our services.

However, efforts to advance inclusion in healthcare are facing increasing resistance, particularly as political and social movements attempt to undermine progress. This pushback threatens not only the professionals dedicated to this work, but also the individuals who need care that acknowledges their unique experiences and identities. Despite these challenges, Behavioral Health programs must remain committed to addressing systemic barriers, combating disparities, and ensuring that services are accessible, culturally responsive, and inclusive for all.

Now more than ever, embedding equity and inclusion into Behavioral Health is not just important—it's indispensable. These efforts help us create environments where providers and clients alike can thrive, leading to more effective treatments, stronger therapeutic relationships, and ultimately, better health outcomes for our entire community. As our society evolves, so too must our approach to mental health and wellness, ensuring that no one is left behind in the pursuit of well-being.

DIVERSITY MONTH

Diversity in the workplace?

Diversity in the workplace is no longer a mere trend, it's a cornerstone of success in today's global economy. Embracing a diverse workforce goes beyond just representation; it's about creating an environment where different perspectives are valued, and individuals can bring their full, authentic selves to work. A diverse workplace fosters creativity, innovation, and problem-solving by drawing from a wide range of experiences, backgrounds, and viewpoints. When people from various walks of life collaborate, they bring unique ideas that help organizations adapt to ever-changing markets and customer needs.

Beyond the business benefits, diversity in the workplace also contributes to a healthier, more inclusive company culture. It challenges the status quo, dismantling biases and fostering empathy and understanding among employees. Diverse teams tend to have stronger emotional intelligence, better communication, and greater flexibility qualities essential for navigating complex challenges.

Moreover, businesses that prioritize diversity are better positioned to attract top talent from all backgrounds. In a competitive labor market, prospective employees often look for organizations that not only value diversity, but actively promote it. Companies with diverse teams are seen as more progressive, socially responsible, and open-minded, which is increasingly important to younger generations entering the workforce.

Ultimately, diversity in the workplace isn't just about meeting quotas or checking boxes. It's about creating an environment where people from all walks of life can thrive, contribute meaningfully, and drive the company forward. The long-term benefits enhanced innovation, improved employee morale, and a better connection to diverse customer bases make it clear: diversity isn't just good for business; it's vital for business.

April 7th: World Health Day

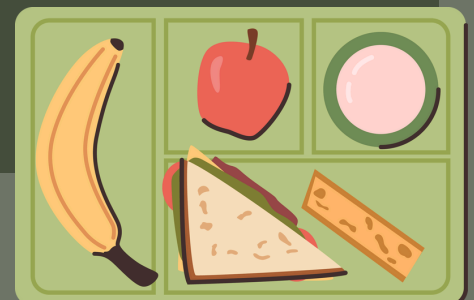
By: Reyna Chaves Solis, Health Educator

Empowering Rural Communities Through Nutrition Education: Supporting Health and Wellness in San Miguel

Nutrition education plays a vital role in supporting students in rural areas, particularly those from diverse backgrounds such as Indigenous communities, migrant farmworkers, and low-income households with unique cultural food traditions.

As a health educator, I have seen how fostering a healthy relationship with food can positively impact students' lives. To address these challenges, I work closely with the Food Service Director for the San Miguel Joint Union School District, and together we aim to expose students to healthy and nutritious foods that will fuel their bodies.

In the nutrition education program, students learn beyond the basics of food groups. They explore the farm-to-table journey, understanding the steps food must go through to reach their plates. Students also examine the benefits of including all five food groups in their daily meals and snacks. Our approach emphasizes adding nutritious foods rather than focusing on restrictions.





Programs like nutrition education are crucial in these communities because food often connects us to family, friends, and culture. In rural communities like San Miguel, limited grocery stores and public transportation can make accessing nutritious foods difficult. That's why programs like nutrition education are essential not only to teach healthy habits but also to foster cultural connections through food. Inclusion is our number one priority, as many rural residents face limited resources. To promote equitable access to wellness resources and address barriers faced by the San Miguel community, Lillian Larsen Elementary School has partnered with the SLO County Public Health Department, California Community Schools, and over 21 local organizations. These partnerships provide vital services such as CalFresh enrollment assistance, injury prevention through helmet safety education, library services, and adult nutrition education resources that are often otherwise unavailable in San Miguel.

Events like the 2nd Annual Community Meal Night build on our nutritional education efforts by creating opportunities for families to engage with healthy food in a supportive environment. This free event was hosted at Lillian Larsen on Thursday, March 27th, from 5:30 to 7 PM, uniting families, staff, and community members in a shared effort to promote health, nutrition, and well-being. Attendees enjoyed a complimentary scratch-prepared meal together, fostering a sense of community while also gaining access to valuable wellness resources. Families also received produce bags filled with fresh, local goods from Harvestly, Etto Pasta, and Sierra Honey Farm, ensuring continued support for their nutritional needs at home!

Nutrition education in this setting is vital because educators can establish direct connections with families, positively influencing their health. Through nutrition education classes, families and students learn how to make healthier choices, such as adding items to their meals to ensure they are eating a balanced diet from all five food groups. They also gain skills in making food swaps for improved nutritional value and strategies for navigating grocery shopping while saving money.

By combining nutrition education with accessible resources and community events, we empower families to make informed choices that promote long-term well-being. Accessible programs like this are essential, especially when partnerships between public health organizations and schools work together to address common barriers. Schools provide an ideal setting for these initiatives, allowing educators to build rapport with families and create impactful learning experiences within familiar environments.



World Autism Awareness Day

APRIL 2ND

World Autism Awareness Day is an opportunity to recognize and support individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families in our community. It's a time to highlight their strengths, advocate for their needs, and promote greater inclusion in the services and spaces that impact their daily lives. By fostering understanding and providing meaningful support, we can help ensure every individual and family affected by autism has access to the resources, care, and opportunities they deserve. understanding and support.

The Importance of Autism Inclusion at Work

Many autistic individuals bring valuable skills to the job, like attention to detail, reliability, strong memory, and specialized knowledge. Leveraging these strengths can boost innovation and problem-solving on teams. Creating an inclusive workplace helps break barriers and reduce discrimination, making the work culture fairer for everyone. It also taps into a talented, often overlooked workforce, especially in fields like technology, data analysis, and engineering.

Inclusive workplaces that support neurodiverse employees lead to higher job satisfaction, lower turnover, and a stronger sense of belonging. Employers have both a legal and moral responsibility to provide equal opportunities and accessible environments for autistic individuals.

Promoting awareness and inclusion benefits both employees on the autism spectrum and the entire organization.

CHILDREN GROWTH & INCLUSION

Supporting Children with Autism

Early identification and intervention can make a significant impact on the development and well-being of children with autism. Families often face challenges navigating educational services, therapies, and social inclusion, making access to the right resources critical.

Ways to Support:

- **Early Intervention Services:** Accessing speech therapy, occupational therapy, and behavioral supports can help children build essential skills.
- **Educational Advocacy:** Families may need support in understanding Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 Plans to ensure their child's needs are met in school.
- **Community Inclusion:** Encouraging sensory-friendly events, adaptive programs, and inclusive extracurricular activities can foster a sense of belonging.
- **Family Support Networks:** Parent and caregiver support groups provide a space for shared experiences, guidance, and encouragement.

Resources:

- [Local Early Intervention Programs](#)
- [Special Education Services & Advocacy](#)
- [Parent Support & Community Events](#)

EMPOWERING AUTISTIC ADULTS

Supporting Adults with Autism and Their Families

Autistic adults face unique challenges related to employment, independent living, healthcare, and social connections. Supporting individuals throughout adulthood ensures they have access to meaningful opportunities and resources for success.

Ways to Support:

Workplace Inclusion: Encouraging neurodiversity-friendly hiring practices and workplace accommodations promotes employment success.

Independent Living Resources: Access to life skills training, housing support, and social services empowers individuals to live independently.

Healthcare & Mental Health Access: Ensuring providers understand autism-specific needs improves healthcare experiences and outcomes.

Social & Community Engagement: Creating inclusive social spaces and programs helps build connections and reduce isolation.

Resources:

[Vocational Training & Employment Support](#)
[Independent Living & Housing Assistance](#)
[Creating Autism-Friendly Healthcare Spaces](#)
[Adult Support & Social Groups](#)

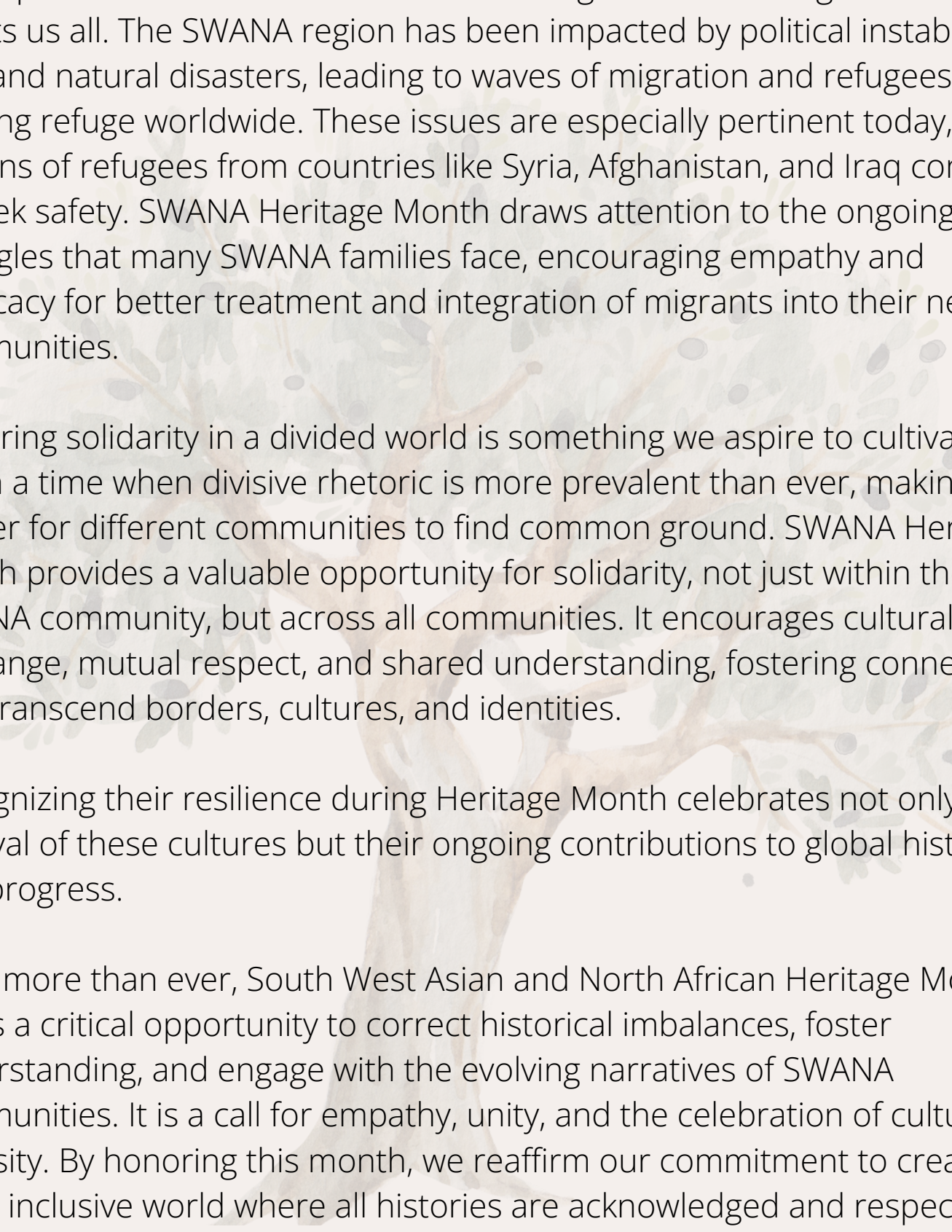
South West Asian North African Heritage Month



As we reflect on the significance of South West Asian and North African (SWANA) Heritage Month, it becomes especially important to recognize its relevance in the current socio-political landscape. With increasing global awareness of issues such as migration, political unrest, and cultural misunderstandings, celebrating SWANA Heritage Month has never been more crucial. Here are a few reasons why it holds particular importance right now!

Amplifying Underrepresented Voices is so essential. In recent years, communities of South West Asian and North African descent have faced increased visibility sometimes in negative contexts related to global conflicts, terrorism, or refugee crises. These narratives often overshadow the vibrant cultures, histories, and achievements of SWANA communities. Heritage Month offers a vital platform to shift the conversation towards the richness and diversity of SWANA cultures, providing an opportunity to amplify voices that may otherwise be marginalized.

The SWANA community has long been the subject of harmful stereotypes, especially in the wake of geopolitical tensions. The events of September 11, 2001, and subsequent conflicts in the Middle East have contributed to widespread misunderstanding and discrimination. SWANA Heritage Month helps educate the public, challenge misconceptions, and create space for more nuanced and accurate portrayals of SWANA peoples and cultures. By highlighting the diversity within the community religiously, ethnically, and culturally it fosters greater understanding.



It is important to address and discuss the migration and refugee issue, as it affects us all. The SWANA region has been impacted by political instability, war, and natural disasters, leading to waves of migration and refugees seeking refuge worldwide. These issues are especially pertinent today, as millions of refugees from countries like Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq continue to seek safety. SWANA Heritage Month draws attention to the ongoing struggles that many SWANA families face, encouraging empathy and advocacy for better treatment and integration of migrants into their new communities.

Fostering solidarity in a divided world is something we aspire to cultivate. We live in a time when divisive rhetoric is more prevalent than ever, making it harder for different communities to find common ground. SWANA Heritage Month provides a valuable opportunity for solidarity, not just within the SWANA community, but across all communities. It encourages cultural exchange, mutual respect, and shared understanding, fostering connections that transcend borders, cultures, and identities.

Recognizing their resilience during Heritage Month celebrates not only the survival of these cultures but their ongoing contributions to global history and progress.

Now, more than ever, South West Asian and North African Heritage Month offers a critical opportunity to correct historical imbalances, foster understanding, and engage with the evolving narratives of SWANA communities. It is a call for empathy, unity, and the celebration of cultural diversity. By honoring this month, we reaffirm our commitment to creating a more inclusive world where all histories are acknowledged and respected.



APRIL 22ND: EARTH DAY

As Earth Day approaches on April 22nd, it's an important time to reflect not only on the health of our planet, but also on how the environment impacts our mental and behavioral health. At the intersection of sustainability, social equity, and wellness, we have the opportunity to cultivate a world where everyone can thrive – physically, emotionally, and mentally.

This year's Earth Day theme is all about restoring and preserving ecosystems for future generations. But beyond environmental sustainability, it's also an invitation to embrace the connection between nature and mental well-being. When we prioritize both the planet and people, we create a more inclusive, just, and healthy world for all.

The Mental Health Benefits of Nature

Spending time outdoors is scientifically proven to improve mental health. Nature provides a space for reflection, relaxation, and emotional rejuvenation. Green spaces have been linked to reduced stress, anxiety, and depression. For individuals in underserved communities, access to nature can significantly contribute to better mental health outcomes.

DEI and Environmental Justice

Environmental health is deeply intertwined with social equity. Historically, marginalized communities, including people of color and low-income populations, have been disproportionately impacted by environmental degradation from pollution to climate change. Environmental justice is an essential component of DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), ensuring that all people have access to clean air, water, and green spaces, and are protected from harmful environmental impacts.

TAKE CARE OF MOTHER EARTH

The Intersection of Climate Anxiety and Behavioral Health

As climate change accelerates, many individuals are experiencing “eco-anxiety”, or a deep sense of worry about the future of the planet. This form of anxiety can manifest in feelings of helplessness, despair, or a fear of the unknown. It’s essential to acknowledge these emotions and provide supportive, empathetic spaces where individuals can process their concerns.

DEI in Sustainability: Embracing Diverse Perspectives

True environmental sustainability must consider diverse voices and experiences. Indigenous communities, for example, have long practiced land stewardship and have valuable insights into sustainable living. By amplifying the voices of these communities and other marginalized groups, we can ensure that environmental policies and practices are inclusive, equitable, and effective.

A Call to Action: Build a Future of Equity and Wellness

This Earth Day! Let’s acknowledge the powerful link between environmental sustainability and behavioral health. By focusing on the health of our planet, we can create healthier, more vibrant communities where everyone has the opportunity to flourish physically, emotionally, and mentally.

Together, we can build a more inclusive and resilient future for all, grounded in the values of justice, equity, and environmental stewardship.

Happy Earth Day!

Let’s create positive change for the planet and people alike.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE REMEMBRANCE DAY

As we observe Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day on April 24, we honor the memory of the 1.5 million Armenians who lost their lives during one of the darkest chapters of the 20th century. This day serves as a time to reflect on the suffering endured, acknowledge the trauma passed down through generations, and recognize the importance of healing for individuals and communities affected by genocide and mass violence.

The Armenian Genocide, which took place from 1915 to 1923, was marked by forced deportations, massacres, and the systemic destruction of Armenian culture, identity, and lives. Today, Armenians around the world continue to live with the effects of this horrific event.

In the context of behavioral health, we must understand how the scars of trauma, especially historical trauma, shape individuals, families, and communities. Genocide survivors, as well as descendants, can experience psychological and emotional challenges, including grief, anxiety, depression, and a strong sense of loss. Trauma can also manifest in collective identity struggles, cultural disintegration, and disconnection from one's heritage. The impact of such atrocities is not confined to the immediate victims, but can ripple through generations, creating lasting effects on mental health and wellbeing.

On this day of remembrance, we stand in solidarity with the Armenian community and all who are affected by the legacies of genocide. Let us commit to fostering healing through empathy, education, and action.

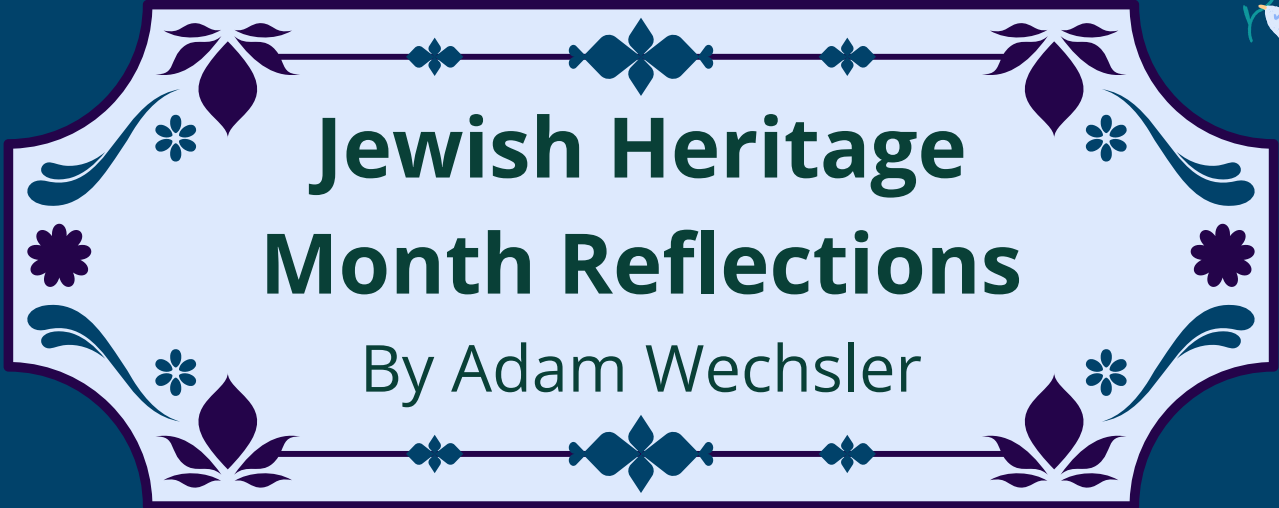
In Memory of Those Lost and In Solidarity with Those Who Endure.

May 2025

**Jewish American Heritage Month
Mental Health Awareness Month
APIDA Heritage Month**

**May 5th: Day for Awareness of Missing
and Murdered Indigenous Women and
Girls**

**May 17th: International day against
Biphobia, Homophobia and Transphobia
Memorial Day**



Jewish Heritage Month Reflections

By Adam Wechsler

My name is Adam Wechsler and I am a Fourth Year Psychology Major attending California Polytechnic State University. Jewish American Heritage Month is a time to celebrate and recognize the contributions of Jewish Americans to American society. One purpose is to reflect on Jewish individuals' contributions to shaping American culture, politics, art, science, and social movements. In reflecting on the accomplishments of Jewish Americans who have deeply shaped and impacted our country, I have taken a moment to examine what this month means to me, my local community, and the Jewish people.

As I reflect on my years at California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo, I have some new understanding on the impact that Judaism has had on my development. Before arriving at Cal Poly, most communities that I found myself in were Jewish. Whether it was my temple, my group of friends from high school, or my Hebrew school, I was surrounded by individuals whose identities were ethnically, culturally or religiously Jewish.

Upon my arrival in college, I struggled to find the sense of community I had in these earlier days. Through finding on-campus Jewish organizations such as Hillel, Chabad, and AEPi, and meeting others who shared similar backgrounds and experiences, I regained that sense of community. It has become clear to me that the Jewish community is vital to support us as we find our way in this world.

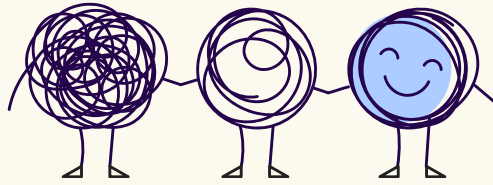
As a Jewish American, I find that there are many misconceptions about who we are and what we believe in. Practicing Judaism comes in many different forms, whether you attend Friday night services every week, only celebrate the High Holidays, or are not practicing whatsoever. Therein lies the beauty of what it means to be Jewish: it is not only a "religion", but something more that ties Jews from all over the world, Jews of different backgrounds, races, languages, and customs.

In times of uncertainty, and especially in the post-October 7th climate, misconceptions about what it means to be Jewish and antisemitism have become more rampant than many have seen in their current lifetimes. It is important to remember that we are not alone. Our community unites us and provides resilience and strength.

Jewish American Heritage Month is a time to celebrate those who have made contributions that have positively impacted the fabric of American society. It is also a time to remember the sacrifices that our ancestors and Jewish Americans have made for many of us to be where we are now. Let us celebrate our success and come together in these times of difficulty.



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH



Mental Health Awareness Month: Embracing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Behavioral Health

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness about the importance of mental well-being and foster open discussions about mental health challenges. This year, we focus on the intersection of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in behavioral health ensuring that mental health services are accessible, culturally competent, and supportive of all individuals, regardless of background, identity, or experiences.

Mental health struggles do not discriminate, yet marginalized communities often face unique barriers when seeking care. Disparities in access to services, cultural stigma, and lack of representation can make it harder for individuals from diverse backgrounds to seek the help they need. By prioritizing DEI principles in behavioral health, we can create a more inclusive environment where everyone feels heard, understood, and supported.

During Mental Health Awareness Month, let's commit to advocating for equitable mental health services, celebrating diverse experiences, and fostering an environment where mental health is openly discussed without shame. Together, we can work toward a future where mental well-being is recognized as a universal right for all.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH



The Importance of Group Therapy for BIPOC Communities

Group therapy offers a unique and supportive space for BIPOC individuals to share experiences, connect with others who understand their struggles, and receive emotional validation. For many, mental health challenges are intensified by systemic racism, cultural stigma, and historical trauma. Group therapy helps combat isolation, providing a sense of belonging while offering coping strategies and empowerment from peers with similar experiences. Culturally competent therapists can create a safe space for open dialogue, addressing specific needs and fostering trust. By embracing group therapy, BIPOC communities can break down mental health stigmas, find solidarity, and engage in healing together.



MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!

May: APIDA Heritage Month

APIDA (Asian Pacific Islander Desi American) Heritage Month is an essential celebration of the diverse cultures, histories, and contributions of people of Asian, Pacific Islander, and Desi American descent. It's a time to acknowledge their impact on the nation, while also providing an opportunity for visibility and recognition, especially in communities where these groups may be underrepresented or overlooked.

The importance of celebrating APIDA Heritage Month within the community lies in the opportunity it provides to bring people together to share traditions, experiences, and stories that highlight their unique identities. By coming together in solidarity, individuals can build a greater understanding of each other's cultures and foster a sense of belonging. Additionally, celebrating in community ensures that cultural pride is passed down to younger generations, reinforcing the strength and beauty of these traditions.

Including Desi Americans in the name of APIDA Heritage Month is crucial because the term "Desi" represents a large and important subgroup within the broader Asian diaspora, specifically people of South Asian descent. Desi Americans come from countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan, and their contributions, struggles, and experiences are an integral part of the larger Asian American experience. The inclusion of "Desi" in the name helps to ensure that their unique perspectives, histories, and challenges are recognized and celebrated within the broader context of the Asian Pacific Islander community.

By including Desi Americans, the celebration becomes more inclusive and reflects the true diversity of the Asian diaspora, allowing for a more complete representation of the cultures and identities that make up the APIDA community.



MAY 5TH: DAY FOR AWARENESS OF MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS



The importance of raising awareness about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) is deeply connected to the intersection of gender and power-based violence, particularly as it affects Native women and girls. This violence is rooted in centuries of systemic oppression, colonialism, and racial discrimination. Indigenous women have faced violence since the arrival of European settlers, with colonial policies including forced assimilation, displacement, and the destruction of Indigenous cultures often involving the exploitation and abuse of Indigenous women. These historical injustices have contributed to ongoing patterns of violence that continue today. Moreover, Indigenous women and girls experience compounded discrimination due to both their racial and gender identities, which increases their vulnerability to violence, trafficking, and murder.



A significant barrier to addressing MMIWG is the lack of coordinated legal action due to jurisdictional issues. In the U.S., crimes against Indigenous women often fall within a complex web of tribal, state, and federal jurisdictions, creating gaps in investigations and accountability. This lack of coordination allows perpetrators to act with little fear of being held accountable for their actions. Violence against Indigenous women is also a form of power and control, where perpetrators view these women as vulnerable targets due to their marginalized status. This violence is not only physical, but also psychological and cultural, stripping these women of their dignity and rights.

The impact of MMIWG extends beyond the individuals affected; it harms entire communities. Indigenous women play central roles in their families and cultures, and when they are taken, murdered, or abused, the loss reverberates throughout the community, threatening the survival and cultural continuity of Indigenous nations. Raising awareness about MMIWG is crucial in pushing for legal reforms, better law enforcement training, and stronger protections for Indigenous women. It also helps empower Indigenous communities to continue advocating for safety, healing, and justice. Ultimately, addressing this crisis is essential for confronting the violence rooted in historical and ongoing power imbalances and for creating a more just and equitable future for Indigenous women and girls.



May 17th: International day against Biphobia, Homophobia and Transphobia

May 17th, 2025, marks the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT), a day dedicated to raising awareness about the discrimination, violence, and prejudice faced by the LGBTQ+ community worldwide. This day serves as an opportunity for advocacy and action to address the harmful effects of biphobia, homophobia, and transphobia.

Bi erasure, the dismissal or invalidation of bisexuality as a legitimate sexual orientation, continues to harm many bisexual individuals. Bi erasure occurs when people dismiss bisexuality as a phase or assume that bisexual people are confused, leading to feelings of invisibility and exclusion. The consequences are serious: bisexual individuals often face mental health struggles such as anxiety and depression, and they experience discrimination both within the LGBTQ+ community and from heterosexual individuals. This lack of acceptance further contributes to feelings of isolation and marginalization.



Transphobia remains a critical issue on this day, especially in the context of increasing laws that restrict the rights of transgender people. In recent years, several countries and regions have enacted laws that target transgender individuals, including restrictions on gender-affirming care, bans on transgender people's participation in sports, and barriers to changing gender markers on official documents. These laws exacerbate transphobia by making it more difficult for transgender people to live their lives authentically and safely. The psychological and emotional toll of such legislation is significant, contributing to increased rates of mental health issues, violence, and discrimination against transgender people.

IDAHOBIT serves as a call to both celebrate progress and advocate for change. It is a day to highlight the victories in LGBTQ+ rights while also acknowledging the ongoing struggles that bisexual and transgender people face. It's a time to educate people about the harmful impacts of bi erasure and transphobia, and to work toward stronger legal protections that ensure the safety, dignity, and equality of all LGBTQ+ individuals. Despite the progress that has been made, the day reminds us that much work remains to be done to secure a world where everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, can live without fear of discrimination or violence.



June 2025

Pride Month

June 9th: Race Unity Day

June 19th: Juneteenth

**June 20th: World Refugee
Day**

JUNE: PRIDE MONTH

"Queer joy is resistance" this is not just the theme for Pride Month, but a powerful reminder that joy in our identities is a radical act of defiance. Today, and every day, we honor and express our gratitude to the courageous Black and Brown Trans women who led the charge for Pride. Their resilience and strength were the foundations upon which this movement was built in hopes it carried on for the generations to come. Pride, at its core, was created as an act of resistance, and it remains a testament to our ongoing fight for visibility, acceptance, and equality.

We must never forget that Pride is not just a celebration, but a bold stand against the hate that continues to target queer and trans communities. We owe it to ourselves, to those who came before us, and to those who will come after us, to resist the forces that seek to silence and erase us. This Pride Month holds even more significance in a time that feels steeped in darkness and uncertainty. It serves as a reminder that our collective strength lies in our ability to rise above the challenges and lift one another up.

Let this Pride be a time of empowerment, a time of unwavering solidarity, and a time to resist not just for ourselves, but for the generations of queer and trans people who have yet to experience the freedom and joy we are fighting for. May we continue to resist, persist, and, most importantly, celebrate our authentic selves, together.



JUNE 9TH: RACE UNITY DAY

Race Unity Day serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of fostering understanding, solidarity, and support across all racial backgrounds. It encourages us to reflect on the progress we've made and the work that remains in the pursuit of racial justice and harmony.

Throughout history, people of color have often stood alongside other marginalized communities, working in solidarity to support each other's struggles for equality and justice. These acts of allyship across racial lines remind us that unity can emerge even in the face of oppression, and solidarity across races is crucial in the fight for freedom and equality.

One powerful example comes from the Asian American community's support of Black civil rights in the United States. In the 1960s and beyond, many Asian American leaders, like Yuri Kochiyama, a Japanese American activist, actively worked in support of Black rights. Kochiyama was a staunch ally to Malcolm X, and after his assassination, she continued her activism to elevate Black voices and address racial injustice. Her commitment to the Black Liberation Movement is just one example of the deep-rooted solidarity that emerged between Black and Asian American communities during the civil rights struggle.



JUNE 9TH: RACE UNITY DAY

Another remarkable example comes from the solidarity between Latinx and Black communities, particularly during the fight for immigrant rights in the U.S. During the 2006 immigrant rights marches, thousands of Latino Americans stood in solidarity with Black Americans in advocating for comprehensive immigration reform. They worked together to push for the protection of immigrant workers, fighting racial discrimination and standing up against policies that disproportionately impacted both communities. The coalition between these groups highlights the shared experiences of marginalization, and the strength that emerges from collective action.

These examples of solidarity across racial lines demonstrate the strength of cross-racial allyship, even in societies deeply divided by colonialism, slavery, and institutionalized racism. People of color have historically supported each other in ways that challenge the systems of oppression they all face, understanding that their struggles are connected, and that unity is essential for liberation.

As we observe Race Unity Day, let us honor these acts of solidarity and commit ourselves to continuing this work of allyship across races. By standing together, we move closer to a world where unity and justice for all people, regardless of their race, is a shared reality. Let us strive for deeper solidarity, always remembering that our collective strength lies in our shared humanity.



June 19th: Juneteenth



Juneteenth, celebrated on June 19th, marks the day in 1865 when enslaved Black Americans in Texas were finally informed of their freedom two and a half years after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. While this day is a significant milestone in the long and painful history of Black liberation, it also highlights a crucial truth: the journey to true freedom for Black Americans is far from over.

The Emancipation Proclamation, issued in 1863, declared the freedom of enslaved people in Confederate states, but its enforcement was limited by the reach of Union troops and the resistance of slaveholders. As a result, millions of Black people remained in bondage until Union soldiers arrived in Texas to enforce the law on June 19, 1865. This delayed announcement of freedom symbolizes the long history of resistance Black Americans have faced in their pursuit of full liberation. Even after Juneteenth, the battle for Black freedom was far from won. The years following the Civil War were filled with intense struggle. Reconstruction, which aimed to rebuild the South and grant Black Americans civil rights, was met with fierce opposition. White supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan used violence and terror to suppress Black people's rights, while discriminatory laws like the Black Codes and later Jim Crow laws were enacted to maintain a racial hierarchy and restrict Black Americans' freedom.

Juneteenth Today



In the 20th century, the Civil Rights Movement continued this fight, demanding the end of segregation, voter suppression, and racial violence. Black Americans, along with allies of all races, took to the streets in mass protests, sit-ins, and legal battles to challenge the structures of racial oppression that persisted. Landmark victories, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, were significant steps forward, but they did not mark the end of the struggle.

Today, the fight for true freedom continues. Black Americans are still fighting for justice, equality, and the dismantling of systemic racism. Issues like police brutality, mass incarceration, unequal access to education and healthcare, and economic disparities all underscore that freedom real, unencumbered freedom has not yet been fully realized. The ongoing Black Lives Matter movement and other grassroots efforts are a continuation of this centuries-long struggle to free Black Americans from the lasting effects of oppression and inequality.

Juneteenth is a reminder that freedom is not just the absence of slavery, but the ongoing work required to create a society where Black Americans can live fully realized lives, free from racial prejudice, violence, and discrimination. While Juneteenth commemorates a historic victory, it also calls us to reflect on how far we still have to go.

World Refugee Day

Friday, June 20th



As we come together to observe World Refugee Day, it's important to remember that refugees are not just a statistic or a crisis to be solved they are human beings with rich histories, diverse backgrounds, and untold stories. They are people who have endured unimaginable hardships, yet they carry with them remarkable resilience, strength, and the hope for a better future.

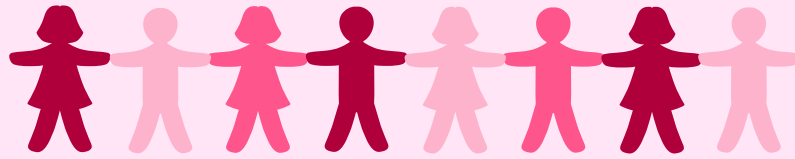
While we often hear about the challenges refugees face displacement, trauma, and uncertainty it's crucial that we also focus on their aspirations, dreams, and contributions. When we humanize refugees, we begin to understand that they are not defined by their refugee status, but by the same human needs for safety, community, and opportunity that we all share.

Behavioral health services play an essential role in supporting refugees as they navigate the complexities of resettlement. Many have experienced severe trauma, whether from war, persecution, or violence. However, with the right care, understanding, and resources, refugees can heal, grow, and rebuild their lives. It's through trauma-informed care, cultural sensitivity, and unwavering support that we help these individuals not only survive but thrive in their new communities.

But beyond just providing services, we all have a part to play in creating a welcoming environment. By actively working to understand the experiences of refugees, and by dismantling harmful stereotypes and misconceptions, we can cultivate a culture of inclusion and empathy. When we listen to their stories and approach them with compassion, we are affirming their humanity, dignity, and potential.

This World Refugee Day, let's take a moment to reflect on the people behind the headlines and to celebrate their courage, resilience, and the opportunity to create a more inclusive and compassionate world for everyone. Let's continue to humanize refugees not just for a single day, but every day so that together, we can build communities where all individuals, regardless of their past, are given the opportunity to heal, grow, and find belonging.

Building CommUNITY: Women of Color Symposium 2025



The Women of Color Symposium, held at Cal Poly's Chumash Auditorium on March 1st, 2025, was an empowering and unforgettable experience. The atmosphere was filled with strong, inspiring women coming together to hold space for meaningful, and at times, difficult conversations. This event provided a unique networking opportunity for women of color, fostering connections that wouldn't have been possible without attending.

Creating spaces like this is crucial because representation matters, and we are stronger when we are united. It begins by ensuring women of color have a seat at the table. The panel discussions on anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity were incredibly powerful, as it is vital to recognize and confront these issues.

Women of color deserve to build community, to unite, and to prioritize self-care and communal care. This symposium offered a space for exchanging information, collaborating, sharing, and listening, leaving all attendees grateful for the opportunity to be part of such a transformative experience.

On the Horizon

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Resource Library in MySLO

We're excited to share that we're developing a DEIB Resource Library to support staff in their professional development and deepen our collective knowledge. This library will serve as a centralized hub for behavioral health professionals to access educational materials, best practices, and tools that advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in our work. Covering key topics such as mental health care, community engagement, policy advocacy, and organizational equity, this resource will empower staff with practical strategies and insights to foster a more inclusive and equitable workplace.

Stay tuned for more details!



THE SLO SOBERING CENTER

The SLO Sobering Center, managed by Good Samaritan, offers crucial short-term sobering and transition services to individuals in need. As a harm reduction facility, the center provides certified withdrawal management services using a social model approach, with Medication Addiction Treatment (MAT) available when necessary. One of its primary goals is to divert individuals from jail and the legal consequences of minor offenses, offering a safe environment where they can sober up and receive immediate support. The center also plays a key role in connecting individuals to mental health and substance use treatment services, case management, housing, and other essential resources in the community.

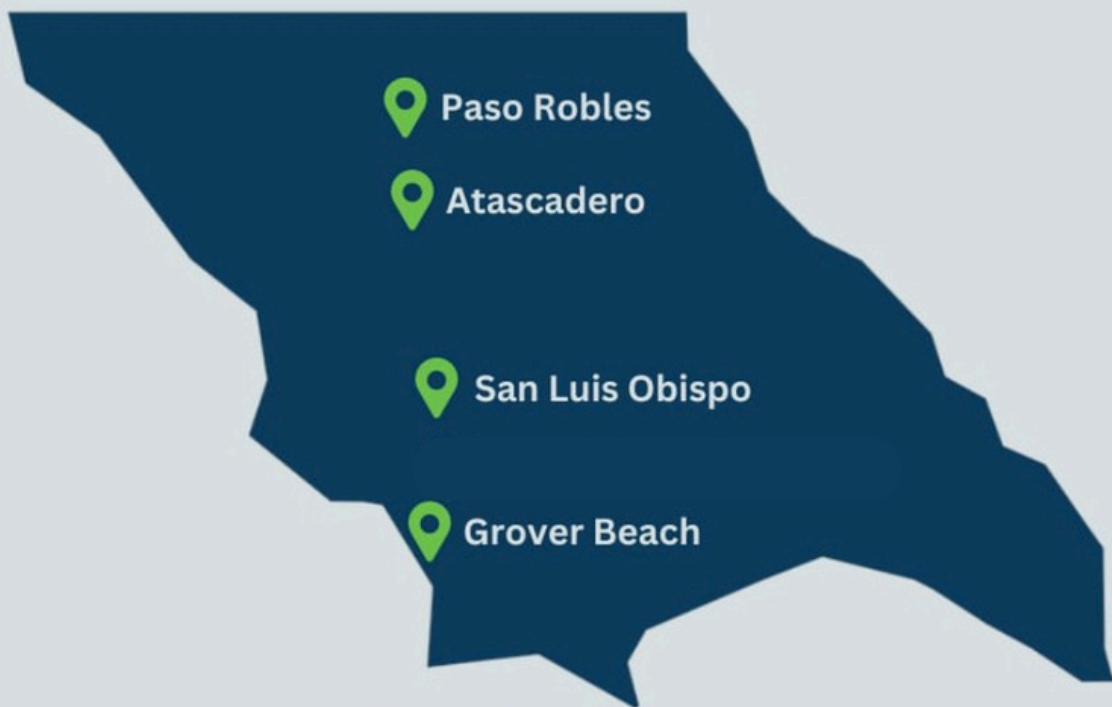
Funded by CenCal Health and grants from the County's Opioid Settlement Funds, the Sobering Center is a critical asset in the fight against the opioid crisis. Its 24-hour, seven-day-a-week operation ensures that adults aged 18 and older have constant access to these life-saving services. Located at the Health Agency Campus on Johnson Avenue in San Luis Obispo, the center provides a compassionate, non-judgmental space for individuals to recover and transition to further care.

The importance of sobering centers extends beyond individual communities, they are essential in all counties. Sobering centers reduce the load on emergency rooms and law enforcement by offering an alternative to jail for those with substance use issues. They provide immediate, non-punitive support for individuals at risk of harm due to intoxication, ensuring safety and reducing the likelihood of repeat offenses. By connecting people with ongoing treatment and housing services, sobering centers promote long-term recovery and stability, making them invaluable resources for public health and safety across all regions.

Contact us at (820) 280-0415

Naloxone Sites

FREE COUNTY-RUN NALOXONE DISTRIBUTION SITES



805 4th Street, Paso Robles, CA 93446; (805) 226-3200

3556 El Camino Real, Atascadero, CA 93422; (805) 461-6080

277 South St, Ste. T, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401; (805) 781-4754

2180 Johnson Ave., San Luis Obispo, CA 93401; (805) 781-4275

1523 Longbranch Ave., Grover Beach, CA 93433; (805) 473-7080

RESOURCES



CRISIS RESOURCES

Central Coast Hotline: call or text 1-800-783-0607

National Suicide Prevention Hotline: call or text 988

Crisis Text Line: text 'HOME' to 741-741

Friendship Line: (People Aged 60+) 1-888-670-1360

Military & Veterans 24/7: call 988 and press 1 or text 838255

Trevor Lifeline: (LGBTQ+ Youth) call 1-866-488-7386 or text 'START' to 678-678



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

County Resource Page

Aegis Treatment Center: 805- 461-5212

Al-Anon Central Coast: 628-400-3033

Alcoholics Anonymous Central Coast: 805-541-3211

Cal Poly Health Services: (Students Only) 805-756-1211

Central Coast Area Narcotics Anonymous: 800-549-7730

Community Action Partnership (CAPSLO): 805-544-4355

Community Counseling Center: 805-543-7969

County of SLO Behavioral Health: 1-800-838-1381

Cuesta College Health Services: (Students) 805-546-3171

ECHO Shelters: 805-462-3663

Gala Pride and Diversity Center: 805-541-4252

Hospice of SLO County: 805-544-2266

LINK Family Resource Center: 805-466-5404

Lumina Alliance

Nar-Anon Central CA: 800-477-6291

Restorative Partners: 805-242-1272

SLO Food Bank: 805-238-4664

Sobering Center SLO: (820) 280-0415 call for bed availability.

Transitions-Mental Health Association (TMHA): 805-540-6500

Wilshire Hospice: 805-547-7025

40 Prado: 805-544-4004

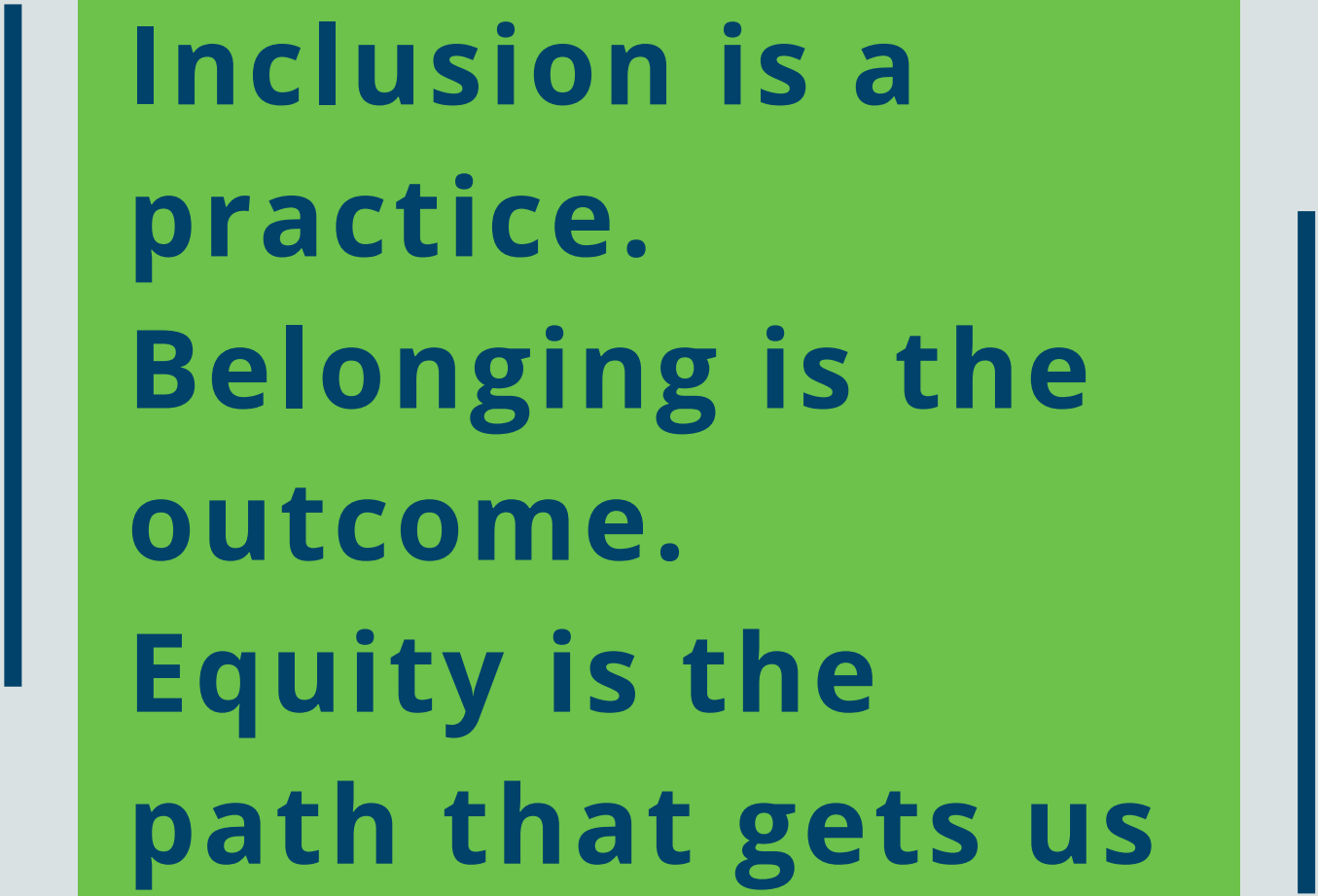


COUNTY OF SAN LUIS
OBISPO
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
DEPARTMENT



**CENTRAL COAST
HOTLINE**
(800) 783-0607
= CRISIS & MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT =
Text or Call 24/7



Two vertical teal lines, one on the left and one on the right, framing the central text.

**Inclusion is a
practice.
Belonging is the
outcome.
Equity is the
path that gets us
there.**

A teal circle containing the text "BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT" in white, all-caps, sans-serif font.

**BEHAVIORAL
HEALTH
DEPARTMENT**