

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH BOARD (BHB) 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

January 2025

Executive Summary prepared by Barbara Levenson, Chair.

Status of the Behavioral Health Board (BHB)

Meetings: Regularly scheduled BHB meetings were held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month except June, July, and December. (The June meeting conflicted with the Juneteenth holiday and could not be re-scheduled.) All meetings were in-person only, with the agendas, prior month's minutes, and notifications for public comments available via the Health Agency website: <https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Departments/Health-Agency.aspx>.

Monthly attendance ranged from 8-13 members, with an average of 10, plus Behavioral Health (BH) Agency staff and guests.

According to BH Agency Staff reports, partnerships and coalitions with contracted providers and non-profit organizations had allowed the Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF) and the Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) to continue operations in the community, providing essential services. However, the CSU ceased operations on October 10, 2024, with the expiration of the contract with the county, due in part to low census figures, high operating costs and resultant low reimbursement figures, and services had to be sourced to an out-of-county provider. Some of these contracted staff attended the monthly meetings, and have offered presentations to inform the BHB members about their work. New contractual guidelines are in development.

Committees and workgroups

Membership: At the end of 2024, there were 16 members on the BHB, due to one member relocating to another state, one whose membership was terminated when they could no longer attend meetings, and one member who passed away. In November, new applications for membership were interviewed, and two names were forwarded to the Board of Supervisors following recommendations and a vote by the BHB to approve them. Supervisor Jimmy Paulding continues as a Board of Supervisors' representative to the BHB. Recruiting new members that reflect the diversity of our community is an ongoing effort. The use of social media, personal contact, and outreach materials will continue to be part of these efforts.

Goals and Accomplishments

- A. **Objective:** Fulfill the Mandated Responsibilities and core Purposes of the Behavioral Health Board
 - 1. **Goal:** Review and evaluate the community's mental health needs, services, facilities, and special problems [(5604.2(a)(1)) Welfare & Institutions Code (WIC)]

As identified in the 2023 commissioned Capstone Report, five areas of concern related to the BH in the County include:

- a) Workforce Shortage (up to 25 percent vacancy rate in clinical positions).
- b) Whether SLO County is able to adequately partner with neighboring counties to provide services, due to lack of resources.
- c) Continued use of Full Service Partnerships (FSPs) and other collaborative efforts that have been successful in meeting a wide range of treatment needs.
- d) Despite close personal connections among community leaders to address problem areas, the county's wide spread geographic locations, lack of transportation, and lack of residential treatment programs leave a void in meeting the needs of the county.
- e) Current use of Emergency Departments in local hospitals to aid in psychiatric crisis management needs reassessment.

In 2025, the BHB will continue to evaluate and monitor these top concerns as part of the monthly agenda, by reporting progress being made to address each area.

Accomplishments:

- Members of the BHB participated in the External Quality Review for mental health and substance use disorder services and attended nine Quality Support Team (QST) Meetings. These meetings addressed the formation and approval of a new Access and Crisis Services Division and the launch of Sobering Centers in the county. One member served on the interview panel for the new Division Manager for the Access and Crisis Services Division.
- Members of the BHB regularly participated in Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Advisory Committee (MAC) stakeholder (now termed advisor) meetings to jointly decide on priorities and practices for funding allocations regarding County of San Luis Obispo Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) programs by attending four MAC meetings.
- Members attended four meetings of the California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards and Commissions (CALBHB/C), receiving updates and presentations from statewide organizations as well as issue-based discussions and exchanges of shared problem-solving efforts among members from other counties.

B. **Objective:** Maintain an active and diverse Behavioral Health Board.

1. **Goal:** Achieve full BHB membership that reflects the diversity of the population served.

Ongoing Efforts and Accomplishments: An outreach campaign was undertaken to develop contacts via social media accounts, partnership with other organizations such as Veterans' Services, NAMI, and others,

and various networks to attract new members who represent the diversity within the county. A presentation arranged by Transitions Mental Health Association Peer Advocacy Team (TMHA-PAAT) was held in September, resulting in two potential new members.

An informational video, being produced by the County Information Team, will be made available on the Behavioral Health website when completed. This adds to other efforts to attract new members from all groups represented in the community. Outreach to Traditional Aged Youth (TAY) to assure membership in that category will remain in focus.

2. **Goal:** Maintain a high attendance and participation at all BHB meetings, including committees and work groups.

Accomplishments: There was a 67 percent average attendance for monthly in-person meetings during 2024.

Site visits, developed as a result of the actions of a BHB Ad-Hoc Committee, were conducted in 2024 by three separate teams. The three programs reviewed were: Family Care Network, Services Affirming Family Empowerment (SAFE), and Martha's Place. There are three site visits planned for 2025.

3. **Goal:** Maintain representation on appropriate local, regional, and state boards, committee, councils, etc., and regularly report to the BHB.

Accomplishments: SLO County BHB was represented at the California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards and Commissions (CALBHB/C) at its quarterly meetings with remote as well as in-person attendance.

Members also participated in External Quality Review Organization (EQRO), Mental Health Services Act Advisory Committee (MAC), and Adult Services Quality Control meetings and others. Reports of such activities are made to the BHB membership as a standing agenda item for the regularly scheduled meetings,

4. **Goal:** Provide training opportunities to BHB Members.

Accomplishments: Presentations were offered as part of scheduled monthly meetings in order to enhance the knowledge of BHB Members. Learning about the range of programs and activities offered within the county provides opportunity for networking, collaboration, and innovation.

Meeting Highlights and Presentation Topics for 2024 included:

January – Capstone YOUTH Report was shared by Star Graber, BHD Director, with gaps in service identified. These will be addressed in the five-year Strategic Plan being developed.

Presentation of the Probation Dog Program with “Ruthie” (support dog) and Chief Deputy Marguerite Harris of the Coastal Valley Academy.

February – Five-year Strategic Plan Executive Summary was shared By Star Graber. Morgan Torell summarized the proposed Bridge Housing Program and requested input on priorities. Proposition 1 and how the transition to “Behavioral Health Services Act” and its impact on current programs was explained by Frank Warren and Christina Rajlal.

A presentation on “Grief and Support” was made by BHB member and Grief Recovery Specialist Amanda Sherlock. The topic centered on children, loss, and the enduring impact of these experiences over a lifetime as they may emerge.

March – The Five-Year Strategic Plan Goals and Categories was presented by Star Graber. There are five strategic areas having four goals each. New BHD Medical Director, Dr. Sid Puri was introduced. Please see **ATTACHMENT** for the BHD Five Year Strategic Plan.

Presentations: (1) The Juvenile Hall Support Services team and Chief Robert Reyes described their innovative methods of positive interventions and support (PBIS) that have resulted in a decreased need for use-of-force in the facility.

(2) TMHA Director Jill Bolster-White gave an overview of the non-profit organization and their many programs including individual work, housing support, and family and community support. These services along with the essential countywide Central Coast Hotline show its broad impact.

April – The new Behavioral Health Board webpage on the County BH website was shared. Staff shared updates regarding impacts on existing programs once the BHSA reforms are implemented.

Presentation: CenCal, Medicare and County Behavioral Health Services impacting options for older adults in the county who seek treatment for mental health concerns were discussed by Tracy Autry from Wilshire Community Services and Seleste Bowers representing CenCal.

May – Updates on the soon-to-be-opened Sobering Center as well as relocation of youth services facilities in San Luis Obispo and South County were shared. Upcoming site visit locations for 2025 were identified, along with a request for team members to participate.

Presentation: Care Court and Bridge Housing were the topics addressed by Teresa Pemberton and Moran Torell. The program links individuals with a specific diagnosis and a civil court process resulting in an individualized treatment plan and a priority position for housing.

NO JUNE OR JULY MEETING.

August – Star Graber spoke about the next steps in implementation of the Five Year Strategic Plan. New Division Manager for the recently created Access and Crisis Services Division, Samantha Parker, was introduced.

Presentation: Crestwood Behavioral Health Services representative Danielle Martinez explained the history of the company and the daily operations of the PHF (Psychiatric Health Facility) since they acquired oversight of it via contract on 7/1/2023.

September – Community-wide training beginning in October for SB43, related to the definition of “gravely disabled” including substance-use disorder, and the durations of psychiatric holds and court proceedings were explained by Star Graber.

Presentation: Mobile Crisis Response and Sierra Mental Wellness were represented by Josh Simpson, Bretney Padilla, Boone Tucker, and Leah DeRose. They spoke about their group and how the county is served: Crisis Dispatch Center, the Mobile Crisis Team (directly to community locations), and the Mental Health Evaluation Team (active in hospitals and facilities).

October – The Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) closed on 10/10/2024, with the expiration of the county’s contract with service provider. A letter of support was requested from the BHB for the Department to present to the Board of Supervisors to move forward with a grant application regarding infrastructure (buildings) with crisis stepdown beds being prioritized. Karina Silva Garcia and Christina Rajlal initiated a Public Hearing of the MHSA Annual Update Report Draft – The mandatory 30-day public review and comment period was opened, with results to be approved by vote at the November meeting.

Presentation: The Sobering Center and its services, operated by Good Samaritan, was presented by Donna Flores and Terri Houser. They shared data about operations that began at the end of June 2024.

November – BHB By-Laws Update language was presented and unanimously approved, bringing the document into compliance with the BHSA requirements for membership.

The MHSA Annual Update Public Hearing was allotted time to report on comments received during the 30-day public review period and to accept additional comments from those in attendance. Karina Silva Garcia and Christina Rajlal conducted this public hearing. The report was approved by BHB vote to be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors.

THE BOARD DOES NOT MEET IN DECEMBER

MEET THE NEWEST BOARD MEMBERS

Trista Ochoa and William (Bill) Matthew were approved by the Board of Supervisors, following a November BHB vote to forward their names for consideration.

MEMBERS LEAVING THE BOARD DURING THE PAST YEAR – THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!

Joseph Kurtzman, a long-time member and advocate in the community and Donna Klein, a Peer Provider who moved out of state resigned.

Mary Bianchi, BHB First Vice Chair, Membership Chair, and long-time BHB member who was an advocate for children and families passed away following a brief illness. Her contributions were many, and she will be missed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Administrative Services Officer Alexandra (Allie) Metcalf for outstanding support and service. Thanks also to the entire Behavioral Health Department Staff and supporting agencies. Their individual contributions to the community and to the operations of the BHB are much appreciated. Thanks also to guest speakers and community members for information and support which they generously shared this year.

Attachment: FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN



STRATEGIC PLAN 2024 → 2029

Providing high-level guidance on what and where the department will focus attention and resources, considering current assets and needs, as well as the policy and economic environment in San Luis Obispo County.

STRATEGIC GOALS & CATEGORIES:

Equitable Access • External Partnerships • Public Engagement & Communication • Workforce & Capacity

PREVENTION & WELLNESS	COMMUNITY SERVICES	INTENSIVE OUTPATIENT SERVICES	CRISIS SERVICES	INTENSIVE RESIDENTIAL SERVICES
<p>Enhance community outreach to diversify the participation and voice of residents who access services.</p> <p>Expand access to school-based services by building and maintaining relationships with all school districts.</p> <p>Leverage public interest to expand informational campaigns.</p> <p>Improve workforce retention and increase staff time spent providing services and programs in diverse communities.</p>	<p>Close gaps in access to BH community services among key underserved populations and communities.</p> <p>Identify opportunities for joint projects, collaboration, and information sharing with other public agencies actively involved in community outreach and community engagement efforts in SLO County.</p> <p>Ensure that there is a county-wide understanding and lexicon for accessing community based BH resources, services, and supports.</p> <p>Augment the BH workforce with incentives and non-clinical personnel well positioned to provide culturally responsive and sustainable services in local communities.</p>	<p>Expand access to facilities that have been restructured to integrate BH services and enhance coordination of whole-person care.</p> <p>Leverage CalAIM to strengthen collaborations focused on coordination of outpatient supportive services, especially stepdown models.</p> <p>Increase public education on the prevalence of co-occurring disorders and the availability of services and resources that address both MH and SUD needs.</p> <p>Develop more peer support and team-based approaches to augment clinical staff while also developing career pipeline programs with higher education partners.</p>	<p>Build community understanding of crisis management to ensure equitable access to culturally appropriate and responsive services throughout the system of care.</p> <p>Enhance interagency collaboration focused on ensuring efficient, equitable access to crisis and intensive residential services.</p> <p>Clarify and standardize expectations of how best to navigate the crisis and acute services system.</p> <p>Bolster crisis staffing and capacity with peer and partnership staffing models.</p>	<p>Expand access to residential facilities offering in-patient treatment including designated facilities for both women and children.</p> <p>Identify and collaborate with partners to increase adult and youth access to longer-term BH facilities, including sober living and board-and-care homes.</p> <p>Develop a communication plan with hospitals, FQHCs, and community partners on best practices for meeting the needs of patients with co-occurring disorders.</p> <p>Increase opportunities for joint professional learning between MH and SUD staff focused on supporting individuals with co-occurring disorders.</p>

Vision: On the road to wellness, every path leads toward unwavering compassion and an opportunity to thrive.

Mission: To provide compassionate behavioral health services that empower individuals to embrace their unique journeys toward wellness and promote a community that fosters healing and recovery.

Values: Integrity • Collaboration • Professionalism • Accountability • Responsiveness • Compassion