County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY
Behavioral Health Division
Behavioral Health Advisory Board
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Phone: 831-454-4767 Fax: 831-454-4663

Salud Mental y Tratamiento del Uso de Sustancias

Approved Minutes
October 15, 2026

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD
SEPTEMBER 17, 2026, 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM
HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY, 1400 EMELINE, CONFERENCE ROOMS 206-207, SANTA CRUZ
MICROSOFT TEAMS (831) 454-2222, CONFERENCE 922 521 473#

Present: Antonio Rivas, Dean Kashino, Hugh McCormick, Jeffrey Arlt, Kaelin Wagnermarsh, Michael Neidig, Xaloc Cabanes
Absent: Natalie Stott, Rachel Montoya, Valerie Webb, Supervisor De Serpa
Staff: Dr. Marni Sandoval, Jane Batoon-Kurovski

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1. Roll Call – Quorum present. Meeting called to order at 3:05 p.m. by Chair Xaloc Cabanes. Kaelin Wagnermarsh participated remotely due to Just Cause.

2. Public Comment –4 individuals addressed the BHAB in the conference room.

3. Board Member Announcements
   - September recognized as Suicide Prevention Month - highlighted ongoing need for connection, destigmatization, and promotion of 988 hotline.
   - Mention of Supreme Court decision requiring schools to inform parents about a student's chosen pronouns.

4. Approve August 20, 2026 Minutes
   Motion / Second: Antonio Rivas / Hugh McCormick
   Ayes: Rivas, Kashino, McCormick, Wagnermarsh, Neidig, Cabanes
   Abstain: Arlt
   Nayes: None
   Passed.

5. Secretary's Report – Jeffrey Arlt
   No training or attendance issues reported.

6. MHCAN Presentation – Adrian Bernard and Nina Stratton, MHCAN Board Members
   Key Points:
   - MHCAN closed due to severe financial and operational issues.
   - New board formed to restore original mission: peer-run mental health drop-in center.
   - Facility undergoing extensive renovation funded partly by a $150,000 anonymous donation.
   - Front Street, Inc. will serve as fiscal agent, providing HR and bookkeeping support to prevent past issues.

- Center will shift to the Clubhouse International model, an evidence-based peer support structure.
- New name proposed: Peer Tree Clubhouse
- Recruiting for full-time Executive Director, must meet Clubhouse International standards.
- Funding: County provided $200,000 startup agreement, and once the facility opens, a service contract will be established that will include ongoing operating budget.
- Target reopening: Optimistically November, realistically possibly January.
- Services (final list pending hiring of director): peer-led groups, structured clubhouse activities, support programs.
- Showers and laundry will not return, as they were not part of the original mission and are financially unsustainable.
- Goal: sustainable, peer-run, accredited clubhouse within four years.

Clarification Items:

- Training will come from Clubhouse International via state-funded BH Connect resources.
- County affirmed continued support and clarified safeguards implemented for fiscal oversight.

7. Patient's Rights Report – George Carvalho, Advocate for Advocacy, Inc.

July and August reports were provided. George attended the meeting.

Clarification items:

- Clarified that advocates can speak with doctors but cannot independently override medical decisions.
- Noted that metrics on early releases and reassessments should be collected and reviewed.
- Telecare tracks admission, reassessment, and release data; advocate may need to request access.
- Advocacy services are available to all individuals placed on holds.
- Suggestion for a formal Telecare presentation to answer questions and clarify facility practices.

Advocate confirmed periodic presence at Hope Forward and availability for contact.

8. Behavioral Health Director's Report – Dr. Marni Sandoval, Behavioral Health Director

A. Adult System of Care (ASOC) Update
   - Preparing for October 1 transition from Avatar to SmartCare electronic health record.
   - SmartCare tailored for CA county behavioral health needs, expected to improve reporting, compliance, documentation efficiency, and clinical workflow.
   - Bridge House low-barrier navigation center opened August 31; 32 beds available, outreach underway to fill all beds.
   - Early positive impact reported from clients; focus on safety, stability, and connecting unhoused individuals to needed services.

B. Children's System of Care (CSOC) Update
   - Implementing required evidence-based practices: Parent-Child Interaction Therapy and Functional Family Therapy.
   - Eleven county staff selected for state-funded training beginning January.

C. Substance Use Disorder Services Update
   - Continuing integration with broader behavioral health system to support co-occurring conditions.
   - State will require fully integrated behavioral health/drug Medi-Cal contract by January 2027.
   - Recovery housing expansion funded through Prop 47, including beds designated for justice-involved individuals via New Life.

- Significant staffing transitions in substance use services due to retirements and career changes; recruitment underway.
- Integration aims to ensure all BH staff feel equipped to support individuals with substance use conditions; focus on whole-person care from first point of contact.

9. Site Visit Committee
   - Planning site visit at Rountree medium and minimum facilities; scheduling forthcoming.

10. Revised Mission Statement, Vision and Goals
    - Item not discussed.

11. 206 Data Notebook Survey
    - Board confirmed no recent foster youth presentation; agreed not to submit any recommendations.
    - Approve the submission of the 2026 Data Notebook containing numerical data only.
      Motion / Second: Wagnermarsh / Neidig
      Ayes: Rivas, Kashino, McCormick, Arlt, Wagnermarsh, Neidig, Cabanes
      Nays: None.
      Passed.

12. Request Board authorization for BHAB to use alternative teleconferencing procedures under CA Government Code 54953.8.6
    - Approve sending a letter to the BOS requesting authorization to use alternative teleconferencing procedures for future meetings.
      Motion / Second: Neidig / Rivas
      Ayes: Rivas, Kashino, McCormick, Arlt, Wagnermarsh, Neidig, Cabanes
      Nays: None
      Passed.

13. Grand Jury Report Update
    - Item not discussed.

14. Future Agenda Items
    - Presenters: Heather Rogers, Sheriff, Prevention & Early Intervention Services (January), County Office of Education, Mobile Crisis, United Way (211), Youth Justice Services, PVUSD, Telecare, Foster Youth Services, Balfour (November)
    - MHCAN/Peer Tree Clubhouse to return in spring once operations stabilize.

15. Adjournment
    Meeting adjourned at 5:02pm.