

**MINUTES – APPROVED**  
**May 20, 2021**

**MENTAL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD**

April 15, 2021

3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Health Services Agency, 1400 Emeline Avenue, Room 207, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

**Present:** Catherine Willis, Erika Miranda-Bartlett, Hugh McCormick, Jennifer Wells Kaupp; Lynda Kaufmann, Serg Kagno, Stephan DuBose, Valerie Webb, Xaloc Cabanes, Supervisor Greg Caput

**Absent:** Antonio Rivas

1. Public Comments

- Adam Novak – comment from the alternative emergency response group regarding the Mental Health plan - include less of co-response, MERT type program, instead MCIS CAHOOTS style program/support team that is not co-response. Amend plan to include a CAHOOTS style program as a better alternative to MERT program.
- Carol Williamson – MHSA plan full of remarks from the community from the last year of stakeholder input process meetings. Plan does not say how issues will be resolved. Looking at budget, there is no itemization of dollars spent by program, they are lumped together. Great explanation on what the different programs do, but difficult to discern how much is spent on a particular program. Hoping process will reengage stakeholders in the way it was intended before COVID. There was nothing really developed that reflects what the community asked for. Other comment - shocked and dismayed to hear that the mental health beds (32 beds) at Riverstreet Shelter are suddenly being closed by Encompass and the County. Our shortage of beds is already so extreme for people with serious mental illness and those beds served those in the greatest need.
- Mike Beebe – Wanted to point out in the report, there are over \$6 million MHSA funds that are available and have not been spent. Big issue is why funds have not been allocated, and how they should be allocated in the coming year.
- Richard Gallo from ACCESS California - CalAim drastically changed our Med-Cal system. Critical we look into this new redesign waiver of Medi-Cal. Second, believe reserve funds can be used at discretion, discretionary based on needs of community. It does not have to come from the department of health care services or the oversight commission that oversees the mental health services fund. It is discretionary, open, and available. County needs to spend or will lose money. State is debating whether to take the money back due to fiscal crisis we are in, due to COVID19.
- Christa – Volunteer with the new Neighborhood Courts Program at the District Attorney's office. Neighborhood Courts is a restorative justice program working with the Conflict Resolution Center of Santa Cruz. Supports CAHOOTS style, MCIS. Sending police into possible mental health crisis situation can escalate things, especially with the current climate around policing. Might have more success working with folks experiencing mental health crisis if police are not present.

2. Meeting minutes for March 18, 2021 to be approved next month.

3. Public Hearing: Mental Health Services Act 3-Year Plan, Fiscal Years 20/21 – 22/23  
Cassandra Eslami, Chief of South County Behavioral Health Services & Community Engagement

- Pleased to report that we did not make any significant reductions to any of the programming within our contracted agencies. When asked stakeholders which program could be discontinued, the feedback received was they did not feel comfortable making those decisions around cuts to other programs. Preference was to see those programs not get increases if that was going to result in other

programs taking decreases. Based on stakeholder feedback, that model was used to create the 3-year plan. [Click here to view the draft MHSA 3-Year Plan.](#)

- Continue to expand our crisis service delivery model around services for youth. Recently launched our mobile emergency response team for youth program in South County. Just received \$600,000 in grant funding to expand that service delivery into North County which will include another behavioral health mobile office van and a team of 2 clinicians and 1 family partner who are all bilingual.
  - Public Comments for the MHSA 3-Year Plan
    - Itemized account of where the funding is going to
    - Mentioned not significant cuts, does that mean non-significant cuts? Regarding Riverstreet Shelter, was that MHSA funding because it is referred to in the plan? Why is it in the report? Request explanation what that means in terms of money

#### 4. Standing Board of Supervisors (BOS) Report, Supervisor Greg Caput

- Biggest project right now is purchasing 38 acres of land for park use and recreation, located on Whiting and Paulsen Road. First addition of any size park to District 4 in the last 40 years. \$2.3 million estimated cost. Currently have \$600,000, with a very good chance of getting grants and funding from the state and federal government.

#### 5. Standing Behavioral Health Director's Report, Erik Riera

- This year there is a \$6 million deficit, which is close to 10% of the overall mental health budget. Behavioral Health has specific requirements from the State that the funding is used for specific programs and services in the community. Funding for shelter operations (Riverstreet Shelter) is not included.
- SB803 Peer Support Specialist Certification and expansion of MERTY Program - [Click here to view the Director's Update.](#)
- Clarification of MHSA funding - Prudent Reserve is funding the State requires us to set aside and cannot be used. The State must provide permission for us to use it and it is meant for an extraordinary emergency. The other half is about \$3 million that represents a small portion of our annual funding. We made minimal changes in MHSA funding for next year because we are able to use those unspent funds but will be exhausting those funds in the next couple years.
- Clarification of different crisis programs:
  - MERT - do not respond with law enforcement. They see people in crisis, in the office and in the community.
  - MERTY - provide crisis services to youth in their home, community, office.
  - Mental Health Liaison Program - 2 full-time liaisons at Santa Cruz Police Department, 2 full-time liaisons at the Sheriff's Office, 1 at Watsonville Police department. Liaisons are co-responders to a mental health crisis or emergency, 911 was called with a life-threatening situation. Officer and liaison decide on the scene who will take lead of the situation. If encountering dangerous situation, officer will take lead and make sure clinician is safe in providing a response.
- Using month of May to transition from remote services to in-person services. Seen dramatic changes in numbers on who we are able to connect with and serve in the community. Overall, lost 17% of clients, close to 600 people. Many folks cannot access us remotely. SUDS services have increased to 41% due to the shift of the Telehealth model.

## 6. Standing Reports

- a. MHSA Advisory Committee (Members: Lynda Kaufmann, Erika Miranda-Bartlett, Antonio Rivas)
  - Committee has not met.
- b. Site Visit Committee – (Members: Serg Kagno, Hugh McCormick, Valerie Webb)
  - Took virtual tour of Telecare. Process of writing report. Committee will look into the patients' rights advocate program in the next couple of months, where it stands, what can be done to highlight the program. Plan to talk to George Carvalho and come up with a plan/report.
- c. County Behavioral Health Budget Committee (Member: Antonio Rivas)
  - No report.
- d. SUDSC/MHAB Merger Committee (Members: Xaloc Cabanes, Lynda Kaufmann, Jennifer Wells Kaupp)
  - SUDS Commissioner Colleen McMahon-Sepulveda provided feedback, changes to Bylaws. Committee members to review Colleen's changes.
- e. Community Engagement Committee – (Members: Valerie Webb, Catherine Willis, Stephan DuBose)
  - Identify the needs in the community and the ways the Board can address them.
  - First newsletter posted on the Mental Health Advisory Board webpage.
- f. Mental Health and Law Enforcement Committee (Members: Hugh McCormick, Serg Kagno, Catherine Willis, Jennifer Wells Kaupp)
  - Contacted Chief Mills to request a meeting.
  - NAMI's Strategic Plan is asking for an increase in Mental Health Liaisons. NAMI will include this committee in their strategic groups.
- g. Nominating Committee  
The Mental Health Advisory Board voted unanimously to keep the current board officers for the next year.

Chair: Xaloc Cabanes  
Co-Chair: Erika Miranda-Bartlett  
Secretary: Serg Kagno

- h. Patients' Rights Report – prepared by George Carvalho.
  - March report to be shared next month.

## 7. Future Agenda Items

- a. Invite Cassandra Eslami in a couple of months to address culturally sensitive outreach attempts in South County.
- b. Invite County MERT team and Mental Health Liaisons to do presentation.
- c. Invite individuals who participate in CIT Training (James Russell)

Motion to adjourn made by Erika Miranda-Bartlett. Second by Cat Willis. Meeting adjourned at 4:58 p.m.