



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND RECOVERY SERVICES

Behavioral Health Advisory Board Meeting

301 E. 13th Street

Merced, CA 95341

April 5, 2022

Minutes

Present: Bruce Metcalf, Chair; Sally Ragonut, Vice-Chair; Zachery Ramos, Secretary; Supervisor Lloyd Pareira; Mary Ellis; Iris Mojica de Tatum; Keng Ger Cha; Vicki Humble; Ted Werner; Manvinder Kaur; Genevieve Valentine

Absent: Vince Ramos; Linda Deol

Others Present: Chris Kraushar, Charles Bruce, Sharon Mendonca; Sharon Jones, Dr. Jin Soofi, Amy Houghtaling (Recorder)

Call to Order / Roll Call

Due to COVID-19, today's meeting was held in a hybrid format, in-person and via video conference. Chair, Bruce Metcalf, called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Audible roll call was taken by Recorder, Amy Houghtaling.

Review Teleconferencing Status

Discussion/Conclusion: Chair, Bruce Metcalf, explained that the Board must review whether teleconference is still necessary for these Board meetings in the next thirty days. Bruce asked BHRS Director, Genevieve Valentine, for an update on the state of emergency status. Director Valentine shared that the Merced County Board of Supervisors no longer has us in a State of Emergency and is now holding all of their meetings in person. The State of California and the Governor's office, however, still have us in a State of Emergency. That means this Board will have to determine by vote if they will stay in hybrid format or follow local jurisdiction and go back to all in person meetings. County Counsel, Charles Bruce, shared that the information being received from the State is saying that the Governor intends to extend the State of Emergency through the end of June. At that point in time there will be another determination on whether to continue. Bruce invited members to share their thoughts on this item. He personally expressed that there is definite advantage to meeting in person for less teleconferencing issues and clearer communication and understanding. Zachery referenced previous discussion regarding a second remote location in Los Banos that would allow Board members and the public to attend without coming all the way to Merced. He also referenced the discussion about reimbursing mileage to Board members that travel from out of the area for meetings, sharing that fuel prices are a factor on distance travel. He supports creating a second location to remote attend the Board meetings. Iris expressed that these are two separate issues of teleconferencing and mileage cost assistance. Genevieve stated that if the Board decides today to go to in-person only format, we could move forward with creating a second remote location because that option is already within the law, as long as it is properly posted. We would then teleconference the two locations together for in-person attendance in two locations. Charles Bruce, County Counsel, confirmed this information. Iris asked if someone could stay on teleconference if that is what they prefer. Genevieve stated that individual joining through teleconference would no longer be available. Attendees would have to join the meeting in person at one of the two physical locations, in Merced or Los Banos. Bruce restated that the current item for decision is whether the Board will continue the hybrid format for the next thirty days and that the two physical locations is something that would have to be addressed separately, when the Board determines to not continue the hybrid meeting format. Vicki stated that her opinion is that the Board should continue in hybrid format for now. Lloyd expressed that he does not care for hybrid formats but, in this instance, he agrees we should continue the hybrid format for now. The Board found that a state of emergency continues to be in place at the State level and secondly, that there is agreement that the state of emergency impacts the BHAB's ability for the members, BHRS staff and the public to meet safely only in person. Bruce then called for a motion to vote on these findings. Lloyd made a motion to continue the hybrid format for the next thirty days. Vicki seconded the motion.



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Recommendation/Action: M/S/C (Pareira/Humble) to approve using teleconferencing for the next meeting. Bruce called for a roll call vote. The names of all present Board members were called and asked for their individual approvals. Use of teleconferencing at the next scheduled meeting was approved by a unanimous vote of members in attendance.

Pareira – Aye
Ramos, V. – Absent
Metcalf – Aye

Mojica de Tatum – Aye
Cha – Aye
Ramos, Z. – Aye

Ellis – Aye
Ragonut – Aye
Humble – Aye

Deol – Absent
Kaur – Aye
Werner - Aye

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement was read by new Board member Sally Ragonut.

Approval of Minutes from March 1, 2022 (BOARD ACTION)

Discussion/Conclusion: Sally had one edit to the way a date was written in line 4 of page 5 in the minutes. Amy noted this correction.

Recommendation/Action: M/S/C (Ragonut/Mojica de Tatum) to approve the March 1, 2022 minutes with the one minor edit from Sally. Bruce called for a roll call vote on the minutes. The names of all present Board members were called and asked for their individual approvals. Minutes were approved by a unanimous vote of members in attendance.

Pareira – Aye
Ramos, V. – Absent
Metcalf – Aye

Mojica de Tatum – Aye
Cha – Aye
Ramos, Z. – Aye

Ellis – Aye
Ragonut – Aye
Humble – Aye

Deol – Absent
Kaur - Aye
Werner - Aye

Opportunity for public input. At this time any person may comment on any item which is not on the agenda.

Discussion/Conclusion: Theresa Comstock, joining via teleconference, introduced herself as being with the California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards and Commissions. Zoe Taylor introduced herself as an intern with the same organization. Amy read the guidelines for Public Comment. Theresa Comstock shared that their organization’s role is to support mental health boards and commissions statewide; including training, support and technical assistance. She thanked the members and BHRS staff for being part of this Board and supporting it in what they do for the community. She shared that on April 19th, there will a quarterly meeting of the California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards and Commissions and that there will be a training this Friday and another in May for Mental Health Boards. They offer various things throughout the year. They also provide a newsletter. Bruce thanked her for sharing this information. Chris Kraushar shared that Gary Comer, a behavioral health program manager for over thirty years, died on December ninth of last year. He was in charge of all crisis services for many years and a courageous skilled man. Chris asked if a small plaque could be placed somewhere on the crisis side of our facilities, in honor of this impactful person in the mental health/behavioral health industry.

No further comment from public.

Recommendation/Action: None



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Director's Report

- A. Student Resiliency Center
- B. SUD and MH EQRO Updates

Discussion/Conclusion: Genevieve shared that we do already have a reimbursement policy for reimbursing a board member for mileage. The current rate is fifty-eight cents per mile. We will bring the mileage form to future meetings for any member that wishes to claim mileage through this process. The mileage would be based from your home location to the address of the meeting, round trip. **A.** Genevieve said that two BOS meetings ago the BOS approved BHRS accepting the grant award we received in conjunction with Merced County Office of Education, for a Student Resiliency Center. The whole design is a preventative program meant to build up the resiliency of students and families in our area who are experiencing social and emotional delays and trauma due to COVID. In addition to the grant, it will also be a MHSA program. MCOE is requesting to purchase a building owned by the City of Merced at the City Council meeting tonight. It will be done in phases and be a campus where we can be co-located. Genevieve thanked the Board of Supervisors for their approval and this Board for their input to that Board. BHRS will be doing a piloted mobile clinic out that would service Hilmar, Gustine, Stevinson, and Livingston. They are also talking to Atwater and Los Banos elementary schools about a mobile clinic for their areas. BHRS is excited about this four-year grant and believe they can make it sustainable beyond that as well. They are looking forward to partnering with MCOE and using ACEs in this new environment. They hope for a fully complete and functioning center by the end of next school year. It will be all Kindergarten through grade twelve students, maybe with some mobile work at UC Merced for college student level. It will be a community learning center on resiliency for the life-long learning of anyone who is deemed a student of sorts. Zachery asked what the timing would be for the mobile clinic to its communities. Genevieve said BHRS has been in conversation with school superintendents about when and how much they want the mobile clinic in their locations. The mobile clinic will have a Mental Health Clinician, a Peer Support Specialist and an AOD Counselor. It will also have a Nurse Practitioner who can additionally do telehealth from the mobile site. The contact at BHRS on this project is Veronica Gallacher, the Director of Children's System of Care. Lloyd asked if they have spoken to Delhi about this project, as they have a new superintendent. Genevieve said she would look into that question. **B.** Genevieve reported on the recent External Quality Review (EQRO) audits in the SUD (January) and MH (March) areas of BHRS. The draft report has been received on the SUD audit. It includes suggestions for improvements; such as streamlining of SUD workplans, expanding a newsletter to all schools and not just those in our programming, and expanding our telehealth processes in our substance abuse programming. Suggestions related to their strengths highlighted that BHRS is starting to break down the silos within its own department and integrating more SUD into the MH programming and doing joint conversations in meetings. They also complimented on how BHRS is doing groups during COVID. In addition, they indicated that BHRS is becoming more up to date on data tracking in SUD. The biggest suggestion they had was a request that we hire more staff and they asked that we become more creative in hiring, recruitment and retention. On the MH side, they have not received a report yet, but during the exit interview they highlighted that BHRS is very thorough in their documentation, which they were not a few years ago. They noted that BHRS has expanded some of its work with religious groups. BHRS has started writing MOUs with churches and a variety of other organizations to really tap into our underserved who go to church and seek support there. In addition, they liked that BHRS, HSA, and community providers like GLOM have started doing outreach events together. They appreciated the BHRS co-location at the Navigation Center as well. They did also note on the MH side that they want BHRS to be creative in its hiring, recruiting and retention of staff and become more competitive. Genevieve shared that BHRS has launched a robust internship program to grow our own team in a creative way. This includes working with the Workforce Development department on Transitional Aged Youth who might eventually want to become Peer Supports or Mental Health Workers. BHRS is working to be much more creative. The formal report for SUD should be posted in a few weeks and the one for MH should be available around September. Genevieve asked for any questions. Sally asked if the Workforce Education and Training that was part of MHSA is still part of MHSA and if the internship program Genevieve described would fall under that in MHSA. Genevieve said that BHRS has used some Workforce program dollars to hire a Program Manager specifically for workforce development. She will supply program administrative support and oversee all of the clinical groups and supervision of the field placement students and interns. That way there is clinical oversight for Workforce Development. Zachery had a comment about recently being appointed to California School Boards Association Delegate Assembly to work with Merced County school boards. One of the things he wants to work on is trying to get the boards more aware of what is available for mental health services to all grades and ages. Bruce asked if Peers are a piece of staffing in this school focus. It's written into BHRS next FY for training dollars to help educate and promote all classifications to build the organization all the way through, including Peer



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positions. Bruce said the Rescue Mission received grant money to train Peer Support Specialists. He and Genevieve will have an offline conversation about collaborative efforts.

Recommendation/Action: Information only.

Chair's Report

- A. BHAB Project Request for BHRS in FY 2022/23
- B. Public Hearing – Annual MHSA Update

Discussion/Conclusion: **A.** Bruce stated that the board members need to select a new project to have BHRS do for this Board in the new FY 22/23. He thanked Chris Kraushar for her work on the Through the Eyes of the Client for the last two fiscal years and asked that Board members give some thought to a new project and bring their ideas to the next meeting. Sally said that the survey process they used last year was helpful in making a final selection from the full list of ideas. Genevieve explained that there is a Welfare Institution Code (WIC) connected to advisory boards that says boards will bring a recommendation to the Behavioral Health Director on something that their department can do to support the BHAB and the community. It also says that if the Board's recommendation is not within the ability of the department, the Director must do a formal written review of it and give you back a formal response as to why it cannot be done. Bruce asked that Amy send something out to members after the meeting that will give them a reminder and some guidance on what kinds of things they might consider thinking about when coming up with ideas for projects. **B.** Bruce expressed that the MHSA group has requested a public hearing in May to present the annual MHSA Update. For that reason, the Board's May third agenda will be brief and, after a short break, the public hearing will take place.

Recommendation/Action: Information only

Training/Presentation – ACEs

Discussion/Conclusion: BHRS' MHSA Coordinator, Sharon Jones, presented on the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) program. ACEs was developed from a nineteen eighty-eight study of seventeen thousand adults. ACEs is a screening process that looks for events in childhood that have caused toxic stress impact, which cause lifelong health effects if not recognized early or left untreated. Two thirds of people in the United States have had an ACE in their life time. ACE categories are physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect or household challenges like poor caregiver situations. Sixty-two percent of all Californians have had one ACE, sixteen percent have had four or more. ACEs affects all parts of populations and communities, crossing lines. However, some populations are affected disproportionately. We must also understand that historical racism can affect how patients relate to health care clinical teams, as well as other organizations in the community. There are different types of stress; such as tolerable or positive stress. It is toxic stress that is the worst. It is stress in high doses. Sharon went over various ACE associated health conditions and chronic diseases. The goal is to become more aware and promote integrated efforts to heal and gain strength and resiliency. The ability to bounce back from setbacks in our lives helps prevent us from having long-term effects on the body. It's important to have buffering agents around us, like supportive relationships, good quality sleep, balanced nutrition, physical activity, mindfulness, and experiencing nature. Trauma informed care is important. Knowledge and policies create that framework. Sally commented that they have an ACE group in her church, giving faith-based support. Bruce said Dave Lockridge began ACE Overcomers which they use at the Rescue Mission. About 100% of the Rescue Mission clients have multiple ACEs items. Bruce requested that a copy of Sharon's presentation be sent to the Board members.

Recommendation/Action: Information only



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Committee Reports

- A. Substance Use Disorder (SUD)
- B. Executive/By-Laws/Planning
- C. Membership Committee
- D. Board Development (New Membership Orientation and Onboarding)
- E. Liaison to the Quality Improvement Committee (QIC)
- F. Liaison to the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Ongoing Planning Council
- G. Other Board Member Reports

Discussion/Conclusion: **A.** No report. **B.** Bruce reminded everyone that projects ideas will be discussed at the next meeting. He also shared that the Board will be considering training requests for the new year and that Ethics training will be offered in the Fall through the County, but may be taken online. The Ethics training is required every two years. Amy can get you a link. **C.** Mary shared that the recent Board applicant has withdrawn his application. **D.** Sally shared that the new Board member onboarding session is scheduled for April fourteenth. **E.** No report. **F.** No report – Vacant. **G.** None.

Recommendation/Action: Information only

Ad-Hoc Committee Reports

- A. Annual Report
- B. Nominating Committee

Discussion/Conclusion: **A.** Sally said she will be meeting with Amy soon to go over edits for the report and reminded members to submit any new or updated bio information to Amy. **B.** Zachery asked that all members be aware of vacancies in their districts for this Board and speak out in the community about participation. He also asked all members to consider participating in a more involved role as a BHAB Officer, sharing his positive experience as Secretary this fiscal year.

Recommendation/Action: Information only

Announcements

Discussion/Conclusion: Bruce reminded everyone about the Grand Opening of the rescue mission's new campus on April twenty second at ten a.m. Vicki told the group that they can deduct the mileage on their taxes as well. Lloyd shared that the Valley Crisis Center is doing a Human Trafficking Awareness workshop on April eighth from six p.m. to eight p.m. at Bear Creek Community Church. You can register on their website or Facebook page. Genevieve shared that the Board of Supervisors are doing Town Hall meetings in order to give information to the community. Genevieve is one of the people fielding questions at the Town Halls. Please encourage your friends to participate. Supervisor McDaniel's is tomorrow evening and one will be held every week in April. Information is available on the County website or Facebook page. Lloyd shared that his is on April thirteenth. Vicki shared that June 4th is the Hilmar Dairy Festival and it is free to have a booth at that event.

Recommendation/Action: Information only

Future Agenda Items / Possible Action Items

Discussion/Conclusion: Bruce reminded the Board that upcoming items are project recommendations, committee appointments, board officer nominations, training for the new fiscal year, and an update from Chris Kraushar. Sally expressed that she would like to have a presentation on project HomeKey. Genevieve confirmed that John Ceccoli will present on that subject at the May meeting.



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Adjournment: Bruce adjourned the meeting at 5:48 pm.

Submitted by: Amy Houghtaling Approved by: Approved and signed on 05/03/22
Amy Houghtaling Zachery Ramos, Secretary
Recording Secretary Merced County Behavioral Health Board

Date: 04/28/22

Date: _____