

RIVERSIDE COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES FOR January 7, 2026 • 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS –

Madam Chair Brenda Scott called the Behavioral Health Commission (BHC) meeting to order at 12:00 pm. Commissioner attendance was taken by roll call and followed by introductions.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING –

Victoria St. Johns made a motion to approve minutes as written from December 3, 2025 and Rick Gentillalli seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS – Madam Chair Brenda Scott wished everyone a Happy New Year and shared she was unable to attend last month's meeting because she was at Capitol Hill conducting advocate work and would be attending the CALBHB/C conference in Sand Diego later this month. Madam Chair also announced the sudden passing of board member Christine Thomstad who served on the Desert Regional Advisory Board and expressed gratitude for her dedication to the board and advocacy work with NAMI as she was the Chair and President of the Coachella Valley NAMI and would be greatly missed.

COMMISSION MEMBER REMARKS – None

PUBLIC REMARKS – None

DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Dr. Matthew Chang

Dr. Chang began by emphasizing that any concerns involving the commission should follow the proper chain of command by first being brought to Ms. Johnson, who would then discuss them with him if necessary to ensure they are handled appropriately. He then announced the resignation of Deputy Director Bill Brenneman, effective January 7, 2026, and concluded by sharing a biography and expressing gratitude to Bill Brenneman for his many years of dedication to the department.

CELEBRATE RECOVERY- Consumer Peer Services (Kristen Duffy)

Kristen Duffy, Consumer Peer Services Manager, introduced certified Peer Support Specialist Anthony Morgan who then introduced Gabriel Arevalos. Mr. Arevalos has been receiving services through the department with the support and guidance from Mr. Morgan. Mr. Arevalos shared he grew up in a broken home, his mother was an alcoholic, he was surrounded by family members who used substances and he began smoking at a young age. That later led him to use other substances and prison. He expressed his life revolved around incarceration, drugs and homelessness. In 2024 the Mobile Crisis team helped him with food, clothing and even a wheelchair after he was involved in a serious accident. With the consistent involvement of the department staff, he decided to go to rehab and then sober living. Mr. Arevalos expressed his gratitude to the department and Mr. Morgan because through their services, support and consistency he is now 6 months sober and will continue a life of sobriety because he now has the coping tools to control his emotions and can seek support when he needs help. Mr. Arevalos concluded by sharing all the programs offered are beneficial, they helped him find his way and can help others find their own light.

NEW BUSINESS-

1. QIC Update

Brandon Jacobs, Chief Data Officer, provided a Quality Improvement of Care (QIC) update, please see power point link below.

https://www.ruhealth.org/sites/default/files/Behavioral_Health/BH%20Commission/2026%20Files/ruhs-bhc-qic-presentation.pdf

2. Site Review Discussion

The BHC liaison is updating the site review list and asked who would like to participate in visits this year. Interested commissioners were noted as Quintilia Ávila, Greg Damewood, Rick Gentillalli, Beatriz Gonzalez, Sheila Mallett-Smith, April Smith, Brenda Scott, Vicotria St. Johns and Launa Wilson. The BHC liaison will coordinate visits once the list is finalized.

3. Annual Training Topics Discussion

The BHC liaison requested topic suggestions by email for the annual training on Wednesday, August 5, 2026.

OLD BUSINESS-

1. Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Update - (Diana Gutierrez on behalf of David Schoelen)

Diana Gutierrez, PEI Administrative Services Manager, gave a brief BHSA update and requested volunteers for the required public hearings. Greg Damewood and April Smith will facilitate the Western hearing; Brenda Scott, Quintilia Ávila, and Rick Gentillalli the Mid County hearing; and Victoria St. Johns the Desert hearing.

2. Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Program (SAPT) Update – (Heidi Gomez)

Heidi Gomez, SAPT Administrator, reported that from September 2024 to October 2025, SAPT delivered over 1 million services, including 15,000 in Riverside. She also noted 93 active Friday Night Live chapters across all schools, which collected over 900 blankets during the holiday drive.

3. Care Court Update – (Marcus Cannon)

Marcus Cannon, Deputy Director of Forensics, provided a brief update on CARE Court. Please see power Point presentation below.

https://www.ruhealth.org/sites/default/files/Behavioral_Health/BH%20Commission/2026%20Files/bhc-care-act-update-1-07-26.pdf

COMMITTEE UPDATE –

Brenda Scot announced Mid County meets tomorrow 1/8/26 in Temecula at 3pm.

Greg Damewood announced Western Region Advisory board is seeking alternative meeting locations but will meet remotely today 1/7/26 at 3pm.

Rick Gentillalli shared the Veterans committee met this morning and will meet again in March.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS-

Greg Damewood requested overview of RUHS Foundation.
Employee appreciation winners suggested by Cheryl Coson.
MHRC and Wellness update suggested by Brenda Scott.

ADJOURN – The Behavioral Health Commission meeting adjourned at 1:35 pm.

Sylvia Bishop

Sylvia Bishop, Recording Secretary

Minutes and agendas of meetings are available online at:
<http://www.ruhealth.org/behavioral-health/advisory-committees>

To request copies, please contact the BHC Liaison at 951-955-7141
or email SBishop@ruhealth.org

FY 2025/26 BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COMMISSION ATTENDANCE ROSTER

MEMBERS	JUL	SEP	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
April Smith, District	P	P	P	P	P					
Beatriz Gonzalez, District 4	P	P	P	P	P					
Brenda Scott, District 3	P	P	P	A	P					
Carole Schaudt, District 4	P	P	A	A	A					
Daryl Terrell, District 5	P	P	P	P	A					
Elysse Rico, BOS Rep. Dist. 2	P	P	P	P	P					
Greg Damewood, District 5	P	P	P	P	P					
Harshita Arunkumar, Dist. 1	P	A	A	A	A					
Launa Wilson, District 1	A	P	P	P	P					
Quintilia Ávila, District 2	P	P	P	P	P					
Rick Gentillalli, District 5	P	P	P	P	P					
Sheila Mallet-Smith, Dist. 3	P	A	P	P	P					
Victoria St. Johns, District 4	P	P	P	P	P					
Dr. Walter Haessler, Dist. 3	P	P	P	P	P					

Present = P • Absent = A

PRESENT		
Deborah Johnson	Willard Wynn	Silvia Silva
Dr. Chang	Lisa Madsen-Newton	Melissa Vasquez
Sylvia Bishop	Alea Jackson	Elizabeth Del Rio
Lucy Lopez	Jacqueline Markussen	Anthony Morgan
Israel Torres	Rita Massie	Conni Ryder
Kristen Duffy	Francisco Huerta	Carolina Ayala
Brandon Jacobs	Ashley Housley	Tyrone Peterson
Marcus Cannon	Dani Damewood	Orli Zaprir
Diana Gutierrez	Carina Gustafsson	Rachel Gileno
David Schoelen	Kristin Miller	Mary Carpio
Heidi Gomez	Mercy Martinez	Leah Newell
April Frey	Maria Martinez	Ye Jee Yoshimura
Tony Ortego	Jacob Ruiz	Kami Winston
Janine Moore	Sandra Colon-Williams	Karen Franks
Mary Walsh	Mary Apprill	Melissa Noone
Amy McCann	Heena Hemani	Sandy Awad
Beverly McKeddie	Raetheea Harris	Gabriel Arealos
Dr. Benetiz	Melissa Dalke	
Kelly Grostky	Felix Gbagbo	