

RIVERSIDE UNIVERSITY HEALTH SYSTEM-BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Behavioral Health Commission – Legislative Committee

Tuesday, March 3rd, 2026

MEMBERS PRESENT	MEMBERS ABSENT	PRESENT
- April Smith– Chair, Behavioral Health Commissioner -- Walter Haessler – Commissioner, Mid-County Board Member - Brenda Scott – Commissioner, Mid-County Advisory Board; NAMI Mt. San Jacinto / NAMI California - Melissa Vasquez – Senior Family Advocate, RUHS-BH, Mid-County -Timothy Kirkconnell- Government Relations Officer	James (Tony) Ortego-Older Adult Administrator Rhyan Miller- Integrated Programs Deputy Director -Beatriz Gonzales, BHC Commissioner	- April Frey/(Substance Use Prevention & Treatment, Collaborative Courts, Juvenile Halls, Field-Based Teams) - Diana Gutierrez/BHSA Administrator - Sandy Awad – RUHS-BH Administration Support - Quintilia Avila – Commissioner (District 2; Temescal Valley area)

ITEM	DISCUSSION	ACTION/FOLLOW-UP
CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS	Chair April Smith opened the meeting and noted she would need to leave early (at 11:00). Brenda Scott agreed to take over facilitation if needed. Attendees introduced themselves.	
ANNOUNCEMENTS	• May awareness/events: Brief discussion about May Mental Health Month (date referenced as May 14, and also clarified that another event date referenced earlier was March 12 for the remaining public hearing—see BHSA Updates. • National Treatment Court Month (May): April Frey shared that Riverside County will highlight treatment court efforts. • Prop 36 update (April Frey): Riverside County reached the one-year mark (noted as February 10) and has received an opportunity to apply for a non-competitive 2.5-year grant; \$2.2 million was submitted last week. Over 750 referrals were noted in the first year. • Directing Change event (Diana Gutierrez): Final local recognition and screening event at the Fox Theatre on May 13 (semi-formal; youth PSA films; awards; food). Diana invited members to participate and indicated local judging would occur (approximately April). • Care Court informational event (Brenda Scott): Brenda shared attending a Care Court-focused event with state and county leaders and highlighted Riverside County's strong support for families (including "Care 100" support) compared to other counties.	
MEETING MINUTES	The committee reviewed the prior meeting minutes and accepted by consensus.	

OLD BUSINESS	a) NAMI Legislative Updates (Brenda Scott) • Care Court implementation, SB 43 implementation, and monitoring BHSA/Prop 1 progress across counties. • Noted proposed bills related to mental health diversion and jail diversion: SB 1373 and AB 46 (introduced; Tim to weigh in). b) RUHS Government Relations (Timothy Kirkconnell) • AB 46 (mental health diversion): CBHDA has taken an opposed position; concern cited about adding a narrow “time cap/statute of limitations” concept on eligible diagnoses. • Legislative volume: Noted rapid increase in introduced bills (over 2,000). Explained “spot bills” and “gut-and-amend” process. • Budget overview: State revenues reportedly higher than expected, but a shortfall remains; explained governor's proposal, hearings, and use of budget trailer bills to implement details. • AB 96 (Asm. Corey Jackson): Would remove the requirement for a high school diploma or equivalent for Peer Support Specialist roles, broadening eligibility. Discussion included clarification that the bill removes the <i>requirement</i> (does not prohibit diplomas/GEDs) and may affect future program requirements if enacted. • Walter asked about using testimony from professionals/grassroots to support the bill during committee hearings; Tim explained the committee process and when public comment occurs. • SB 329 (Sen. Blakespear) and SB 490 (Sen. Umberg): Tim flagged both as watch items. Both would require investigations of DHCS rule/guidance complaints in treatment facilities to be launched within 10 days (concerns about workload/burnout; ambiguity of “business vs. calendar days”). • AB 2225: Chair April Smith asked for follow-up; Tim summarized it as relating to state hospital patient funds and noted limited applicability to RUHS (state facility-focused). • Orientation: Tim provided a helpful overview of California’s two-year legislative cycle, bill introductions (Jan–Feb 20), budget timelines, and governor signing/veto windows.	
NEW BUSINESS	A. BHSA Updates (Diana Gutierrez) • Draft Integrated Plan timeline: ○ Draft plan due March 31, 2026 (submission via portal). ○ Final plan due June 30, 2026 with Board of Supervisors routing/approval required. • Public comment strategy: Riverside County chose to complete posting/public comment/hearings before draft submission to allow more time for final routing and meeting the June 30 deadline; noted other counties may be handling timelines differently. • Public hearings status:	

	○ Feb 18 (Western Region): ~30 attendees ○ Feb 26 (Desert/Indio): ~48 attendees ○ Remaining hearing: March 12 (Hemet/Mid County) ▪ 4:00–5:00 PM: Community forum (Q&A/informal engagement with staff; visuals; swag; food) ▪ 5:00–7:00 PM: Official public hearing (public comment only; no Q&A) ○ Facilitators (Commissioners): Brenda Scott and Quintilia Avila volunteered; Rick also expected to attend; Sandy and Diana will support onsite. ● Next steps: ○ Compile a summary of comments after final hearing. ○ Convene an ad hoc meeting with participating Commissioners. ○ Obtain local CEO/county CEO certification for the draft plan. ○ Submit draft plan package to the state by March 31; await state feedback; make required corrections; route final plan to Board of Supervisors by June 30. ● Audience composition discussion: Diana explained attendance varies by region (families, CBOs, consumers, individuals with lived experience including homelessness). Noted word-of-mouth and partner engagement increases turnout. B. Forum vs. Public Hearing Clarification (Q&A) ● Quintilia asked how the forum differs from the public hearing and what types of questions are asked. Diana explained forums allow staff interaction and education to support more meaningful feedback; public hearing is one-way comment collection. ● Dietary note: Quintilia shared she is pescetarian; Diana confirmed vegetarian options are typically provided. Brenda noted some agenda items appeared to be “follow-up/ongoing” and suggested moving certain topics to Old Business next time, including: ● Governor’s budget impacts on behavioral health ● AB 2225 / SB 43 references ● Care Court referrals/updates (noting SB 43 implementation in county began Jan 1; suggestion to include “Bipolar I disorder with psychosis” language in notes)	
COMMITTEE UPDATES	No additional committee updates were reported.	

NEXT MEETING	Wednesday, May 6 2026 (Time and format to be confirmed)	
PUBLIC COMMENTS	No public comments	
ADJOURNMENT	The meeting adjourned at 11:25 AM	

FY 25/26 LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE ROSTER

Present = **P** · Absent = **A** · Medical Leave = **ML**

Members	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
1. April Smith	A		P		P		P		P			
2. Beatriz Gonzalez	A		P		P		A		A			
3. Brenda Scott	P		P		P		P		P			
4. Dr. Walter Haessler	ML		P		P		P		P			
5. Melissa Vasquez	P		P		P		P		P			