

RIVERSIDE COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES FOR March 5, 2025 • 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm

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

Victoria St. Johns called the Behavioral Health Commission (BHC) meeting to order at 12:02 pm and Greg Damewood led the pledge of allegiance. Commissioner attendance was taken by roll call and followed by introductions.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING –

Greg Damewood made a motion to approve minutes as written from February 5, 2025 and Rick Gentillalli seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS – Victoria St. Johns Chairing BHC meeting on behalf of Chair Richard Divine and Vice Chair Brenda Scott. She then led a happy birthday song to recognize commissioners Daryl Terrell and Greg Damewood for the birthdays.

COMMISSION MEMBER REMARKS –

Greg Damewood suggested a list of the department's clinic addresses should be posted at all department sites.

Rick Gentillalli announced he was involved in a two-week trial in Los Angeles which left him unable to participate in any commission business but that has now been completed.

Daryl Terrell shared he attended a conference in Santa Barbara advocating for behavioral health and learned that Santa Barbara County refers to behavioral health/mental health as mental wellness and feels that it is more appropriate language and more welcoming and would like the RUHS-BH department to consider using that term.

Victoria St. Johns announced she attended the Franklin ribbon cutting which was well attended and a beautiful site and thanked the department for all their efforts.

PUBLIC REMARKS –

Kelly Merchant expressed concerns regarding Coachella Valley's long term psychiatric inpatient care facilities. As an EMT she has transported hundreds of patients in mental health crisis which are often placed on a 72 hour hold and Coachella Valley has only one small temporary holding facility and most patients must be transported over 60 miles out due to limited space or if they are seeking long term inpatient care. This presents a challenge for those patients because they do not have a way to be transported back home as they cannot afford a way back home and/or have no vehicle of their own. Ms. Merchant wanted to bring this to the department's attention in efforts to advocate for a long-term psychiatric care facility in the Coachella Valley.

Nancy Stevens brought to the department's attention that several residents of a nursing home have been and continue to be denied behavioral health services and is asking that Riverside County explore this and lead in repairing the misinformation that nursing home residents must accept BH services from nursing home contracted providers.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT –

Dr. Chang provided a brief report and announced the ribbon cutting of the Franklin residential behavioral health care facility that took place. This is an 84-bed facility and will assist in the step-down process of allowing residents to discharge from higher levels of care into their facility. He also announced the topping off ceremony for the Mead Valley Wellness Village which was followed by a tour of the 19-acre facility on a golf cart. This is a 559-bed facility that includes urgent care and is on target for opening in 2026/2027. Dr. Chang thanked the commission for their support on these 2 big infrastructure projects. He continued by sharing the national community correctional health care (NCCHC) for the jail systems, visited the Riverside County jails and shared they loved the work done by the county and have the best policies and procedures they have seen in comparison with jails across the country. Dr. Chang thanked Ms. Deborah Johnson, Rhyann Miller, Aaron Perez and all the detention services staff for their monumental work. He concluded by stating the concerns shared earlier on behalf of Coachella Valley are valid and work is currently being done by behavioral health with the hospital and operational staff, and they've made strides and are continuing to bring more resources.

CELEBRATE RECOVERY- Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (Julie Curran)

Julie Curran, supervisor of Public Safety Engagement Team (PSET) and Care Coordination Team, introduced BHSIII, Debra Wade. Ms. Curran explained PSET collaborates with Riverside Police Department and Riverside City code enforcement to offer resources for mental health, medical care and short-term housing options to the homeless population. Ms. Wade shared she and her partner, which is a certified peer support specialist work out in the community speaking with the unhoused population offering resources and assistance in accessing those resources daily. Ms. Wade then introduced Cliff Lamb and praised him for the progress he has made.

Mr. Lamb began by stating "addiction is giving up everything for one thing and recovery is giving up one thing for everything!" He shared 76 days ago he was homeless in the streets of Riverside and in addiction at 65 years age. For 51 years he has been actively in his addiction, living and thought he would die in streets due to addiction and feels if it wasn't for Debbie and Stephanie with PSET he would have. Mr. Lamb expressed that they had seen differently than he did, they had the foresight and vision to see his potential that he didn't see and offered him their support and he accepted. They took him to ARC for 24 days and then Cedar House in Bloomington where he is currently at and once a sober living home is secured, he will go there. Mr. Lamb shared that he will not be deterred by any setbacks and is determined to live the life he wants t. He concluded by thanking Lori Robertson, Stephanie and Justin Mane for their support and his sister who is his biggest supporter.

NEW BUSINESS-

1. Site Reviews

The Behavioral Health Commission Liaison asked for volunteers of the commission to complete site reviews that will go into the BHC Annual Report for Fiscal Year 24/25. And reminded the commission 3 site visits were needed per region and encouraged the new commissioners to complete a site visit with another commissioner who has experience with this and can assist them. The BHC liaison also reminded the commission to return the site review in a timely manner (1 week from site visit).

Commissioners Victoria St. Johns, Beatriz Gonzalez, Daryl Terrel, Greg Damewood, April Smith, Sheila Mallet-Smith, Harshita Arunkumar, Launa Wilson, Elysse Rico and Quintilia Ávila all volunteered to complete a site visit.

2. **SAPT (Substance Abuse Prevention & Treatment) System Update & Prop 36 Overview (April Frey & Heidi Gomez)**

Rhyan Miller, Deputy Director of Integrated Programs, introduced April Frey and Heidi Gomez, Administrators of SAPT programs. Ms. Gomez shared an overview of the SAPT contractor and county clinic caseloads from March of 2024 to February of 2025 which covers outpatient, residential and care coordination teams. These numbers are combined with contractors and county clinics and the caseload data shows there has been an increase in services provided, in March services were provided to 1500 people and currently services are being provided to over 1900 people. SAPT outpatient and withdrawal management reflects March of 2024 provided services to over 1000 people and currently over 1400 so there has been an increase in services being provided there as well. The narcotic treatment program (NTP) reflects an increase as well with March of 2024 servicing 1500 and currently over 1800. Ms. Gomez also explained that the SAPT prevention, recovery residence and sobering centers have shown a small decrease, March of 2024 reflected 804 and currently 755 with major decrease being in the sobering centers however the prevention numbers have shown an increase in prevention services to students and want to continue to reach more children. She also shared that recovery residence has shifted to HHOPE and under Marcus Cannon. Ms. Gomez continued by sharing Recovery Incentives is a new program which is contingency management and is an evidenced based cost-effect six-month program for members with medical with a stimulant use disorder diagnosis. It was launched by MFI recovery in August of 2023 and in August of 2024 the county began a pilot in Lake Elsinore, Palm Springs and Indio SAPT and launched in November of 2024 in Desert Hot Springs. It offers a recovery incentive for those who test negative in the form of a gift card, this has resulted in 72 percent of stimulant negative results out of 13,000 urine drug tests that have been administered and over 140,000 dollars delivered in incentives to its 600 members being served. Ms. Gomez concluded by announcing the southwest team expansion of Friday Night Live (FNL) which is located in Lake Elsinore. FNL currently has 109 chapters countywide but the goal with this expansion is to have 150 chapters.

Ms. Frey provided an overview of SAPT's field-based teams and the goal of the BH navigation team. Their goal is to improve the physical and behavioral health of those receiving services and prevent repeat hospitalizations of RUHS patients by providing appropriate linkage to substance use disorder, behavioral health services, housing and domestic violence. There are currently three teams that cover the hospital 7 days a week from 7am to 8pm. Due to this need a partnership with public health was developed and a need in the Desert was requested so there will now be a new Desert Navigation team that will be stationed at the Desert Regional hospital that will provide linkage to treatment, medical and psychiatric care, shelter, benefits and ongoing care coordination. Ms. Frey continued by sharing Perinatal Navigation services have also grown across Riverside County and now have two and a half counselors working with the perinatal population and the team works closely with HerCare at the medical center. She continued with the PSET teams which partnered with RPD and the City of Riverside which started six months ago in August of 2024 that involves outreach and engagement with the unhoused population. Care Coordination and START teams support is offered to every consumer who has been admitted to residential treatment and is assigned a CT counselor that meets with them regularly to link them to needed services. The START program is an intensive case management team designed to reduce repeated admissions to county mental health programs. MAT (medication for addiction treatment) services started in 2020 and psychiatric services began in 2022, 300 members are receiving MAT services.

Ms. Frey continued the overview by sharing the collaborative courts address the underlying issues that cause people to become justice involved through a multi-agency partnership and participants are provided with services including counseling, treatment, housing, vocational

skills, education, assistance in accessing government benefits and linkage to other support services. They were recently awarded a \$2 million grant for Family Preservation Court for the next five years allowing 400,000 a year, this will allow training, recovery residence and much more. There is also another partnership with DPSS which offers the centralized screening program, this provides substance use assessments and care coordination services for anyone with an open investigation or open dependency case within Riverside County DPSS and referrals come directly from DPSS.

Ms. Frey and Ms. Gomez concluded by providing information briefly on Prop 36 sharing that it was passed and voted on in November of 2024 by voters. This new law will change some misdemeanor offenses into felonies, lengthen some felony sentences, require some felonies be served in prison and may be considered for treatment that would require mandated treatment. This would apply to people who possess drugs such as fentanyl, heroin, cocaine or methamphetamines and have two or more past drug convictions. If referred for treatment eligibility would be reviewed by case worker, drug addiction expert and if eligible referred to a treatment program. This change affects Prop 47 and undoes some of the punishment reductions in place. Ms. Frey and Ms. Gomez concluded by stating not much more information is known on Prop 36 at this time since it is still fairly new but would provide updates as more information is available.

OLD BUSINESS-

1. Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Update - (David Schoelen)

David Schoelen, Mental Health Service Act Administrator, announced that the stake holders process is a part of the public hearings and those will be conducted by members of commission. He will ask for volunteers at next months BHC meeting for each of the public hearing meetings. The public hearing meetings will be conducted during the same time of each of the regional May is Mental Health Month events at a designated site. He concluded by announcing there are several ways for the public to participate which would be in person, virtually or requesting a DVD which is offered in different languages.

Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Program (SAPT) Update – (April Frey & Heidi Gomez) - None

2. Care Court Update – (Marcus Cannon)

Marcus Cannon, Deputy Director of Forensics, provided a brief update on Care Court sharing that there were 144 petitions and 140 clients. And of 246 integrated referrals, 234 individuals were referred, 77 of those became CARE Court Petitions and 63 of those petitions were filed directly in Civil Court. Mr. Cannon concluded by sharing the marketing team reached out asking to film a success story which will be taking place on Friday and shared there will be a graduation taking place in late March.

Resources Available:

www.Care-Act.org

COMMITTEE UPDATE (Desert RAB) – TABLED

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS-

WET Employee Appreciation Winner suggested by Cheryl Coson.
TAY and Children's Program Overview.
Chair elections and nomination committee discussion suggested by Sylvia Bishop.
3 Project Overview suggested by Brenda Scott.
Department AI plans suggested by Walter Haessler.

ADJOURN – The Behavioral Health Commission meeting adjourned at 1:55 pm.

Sylvia Bishop

Sylvia Bishop, Recording Secretary

FY 2024/25 BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COMMISSION ATTENDANCE ROSTER

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

Present = P • Absent = A • Medical Leave = ML

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

PRESENT		
Bill Brenneman	Nisha Elliott	Daniel Gonzalez
Lucy Lopez	Carina Gustafsson	Melissa Vasquez
Sylvia Bishop	Kristin Miller	Rebecca Paul
Deborah Johnson	Maria Martha Moreno	Elena Martinez
Dr. Chang	David Schoelen	Dani Damewood
Kristen Duffy	Alea Jackson	Kami Winston
Willard Wynn	Lawrence Blake	Steph Hakkar
Tony Ortego	Dorothy Cockrell	Carolina Ayala
Jacqueline Markussen	Cliff Lamb	Martha Burns
April Frey	Debra Wade	Carmela Soto
Heidi Gomez	Sujei Larkin	Joseph Paige
Rhyan Miller	Miriam Resendiz	Julie Curran
Diana Gutierrez	Lori Robertson	
Marcus Cannon	Marisela Gil	

OTHERS PRESENT VIRTUALLY	
Anniemarie Morales	Nancy Stevens
Leah Newel	Orli Zapir
Melissa Dalke	Jane Beamer
Dolores De Matino	Janine Moore
April Smith	Lisa Erazo
Amelia Diaz	Elizabeth Del Rio
Maria Arnold	Nosheen Samuel
Eunice Wright	Kelly Merchant