

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

**Mendocino County Behavioral Health Advisory Board**



**Compiled by Flinda Behringer, Chair 2023**

**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD 2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

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## **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD 2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The Mendocino County Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB) transitioned away from virtual meetings per AB 2449, which mandated the beginning of in-person meetings beginning March 1, 2023. Exceptions to the bill were a list of “emergency circumstances” which could be used by Board members to participate remotely if necessary. The Board continued to meet to oversee and advocate for behavioral health services in Mendocino County, albeit with some difficulty as members who were able to participate remotely, but not in person began to resign from the Board.

In total, BHAB scheduled 13 regular meetings and one special meeting for a total of 14 meetings. 2 meetings were canceled (January and August) and 5 meetings did not have a quorum so no business was conducted in 7 out of 14 meetings. In February, the Board authorized remote meetings for January and February. After February all meetings were to be held in person per the revised Brown Act teleconferencing rules. Per these rules, each member may only schedule up to two remote meetings per year.

The meetings dealt with a variety of topics including the following: 1) Staffing and recruitment issues; 2) Crisis Services Summary; 3) Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF) updates; 4) Need to increase the number of beds in the state mental health hospital system, primarily to divert more jail inmates with mental health and substance abuse issues from jails to treatment; 5) budget impacts of an increase in conservatorships; 6) Mental Health Services Act Updates; 7) In-Person meetings required; 8) External Quality Review Organization (EQRO) Mental Health Plan FY2021-22 Report; and 9) Tribal Advisory Committee.

#### **1. Staffing and recruitment issues**

California continues to experience a mental health crisis. Local agencies and Behavioral Health & Recovery Services (BHRS) are having difficulty recruiting and hiring qualified mental health professionals and staff. County staff have been stretched thin. For example, staff took on extra duties to assist BHAB in agenda preparation and posting and when Manzanita Services closed, the County assigned staff to open Wellness Centers in Ukiah and Willits. Also, due to Manzanita closing, Anchor Health took on the provision of Medi-Cal services and services to children. The MAC (Multi-Agency Coalition) meeting process continues as agencies continue to provide more services with less staff. Anchor Health Management (AHM) continues to use trainees from local masters programs to staff some positions. Neighboring counties pay more, so people commute outside Mendocino County to earn the extra dollars.

#### **2. Crisis Services Summary**

Crisis services continue to meet with jail discharge planners weekly to assist in connecting individuals who are due to be released from jail to appropriate services and needed medications. Aftercare for released individuals continues to be a barrier to services as these services are voluntary. The alert system put together by BHRS, ACT and UPD to assist law enforcement in figuring out where a client should and could go before they end up in jail continues to function well. Mobile crisis is available seven days a week and can assist in this process. The Crisis Residential Treatment facility

(CRT), “Orchard Project” continues to provide short-term, intensive and supportive services. BHAB member Gorny was approved as representative to the CIT (Crisis Intervention Training) Committee and reports monthly to the Board. CIT is working on peer support training and continues to assist the Mendocino County Sheriff's Office with outreach. Crisis intervention and prevention services for youth are a focus of MHSA planning going forward.

### 3. Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF)

County mental health reports to BHAB on the demolition and rebuilding of the Whitmore facility into a PHF. Demolition on the original building began July, 2023 and the original projected timeline of 38 months has been extended. Changes in accessibility access have been made. The PHF will be a 16 bed “super” PHF in order to meet Medicare and Medi-Cal standards. BHAB wrote a letter of support for Mendocino County’s BHCIP Round 5: Crisis and Behavioral Health Continuum application to provide funding to complete the PHF.

### 4. Need to increase the number of beds in the state mental health hospital system

The acute need to increase the number of beds in the State Hospital System to prevent incompetent individuals from spending months incarcerated, often in solitary confinement, while waiting for a bed continues as a serious need, which the State says should to be addressed by Proposition 1. However, it appears that Counties will lose some MHSA dollars if the measure passes.

### 5. Increase in Conservatorships

The number of conserved persons with severe mental illness continues to increase and has large impacts on the budget according to BHRS Director Miller. Realignment funds are used to cover these costs and the possibility of decreases in realignment funds and increases in the conserved population will negatively impact the County’s Mental Health Budget.

### 6. MHSA Quarterly Updates

Manzanita closed in March and staff and clients have been picked up by other agencies. The daily ACT meeting of agencies continues to address the needs of the most acute clients. The Children’s System of Care is still of concern. Anchor Management reports an increase in stress among 13 to 14 year olds. MHSA and Quality Improvement (QIC) Stakeholder Forum Schedule for 2023-2024 was published and the MHSA Annual Update FY 2023-2024 report was provided to BHAB for input. BHAB input on MHSA funding priorities was addressed at the Special Meeting, March 3. Issues raised included transportation, detox, new RFP funding, crisis services and communication among Native Tribes.

### 7. In Person meetings now required

In February, the Board authorized remote meetings for January and February. After February, all meetings were held in person per the revised Brown Act rules in place that allow each member to schedule up to two remote meetings per year. This change marks the end of the three years of Zoom, hybrid and in person meetings authorized during the Covid pandemic. BHAB members discussed the positive effect Measure AB817 would have on Board member retention and allow for more flexibility in establishing a quorum. The Behavioral Health Regional Training Center, which opened in 2022 continues to be used for many BHAB meetings.

### 8. EQRO Mental Health Plan FY 2022-23 Report

Agencies prepared for External Quality Review Organization (EQRO) that reviews County processes, functions, staffing levels and compliance with local mental health laws. Some positive developments noted were that post psychiatric inpatient follow-up rates exceeded state average; that another level of care was added with the opening of the CRF, and NAMI and MHP developed the Native Connections Partnership with the tribal community. Final Mendocino Mental Health Plan (MHP) recommendations included the need to design culturally appropriate ways to increase Latino/Hispanic engagement and to reach out to different groups of beneficiaries to offer information and resources regarding how they can be involved in committees to amplify their voice in the system of care.

#### 9. Tribal Advisory Committee

The concept of a Tribal Advisory Committee appointed by the tribes to enhance communication regarding the mental health services that Native Americans are provided and to receive feedback from tribes regarding these services was advanced by Member Martinez and was referred to County Counsel. BHAB chair met with County Counsel to discuss and reviewed the substance of that meeting with BHAB. Member Martinez continues to work on a meeting with tribes to improve trust with them. The Native Connections group also continues to function. It was formed with NAMI and tribal members and its purpose is to identify and discuss the gaps in mental health and substance abuse services within the Native American community.

### **ACTIONS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

The following is a list of accomplishments and actions taken by BHAB as well as Presentations to the Board by a variety of community agencies used for Board edification and action:

Flowcharts placed on County Behavioral Health website.

MHSA Plan Update reviewed.

2022 Data Notebook was completed with the assistance of County Behavioral Health and was approved by BHAB at April meeting. The focus of the Notebook in 2022 is the impact of the Covid-19 public health emergency on 1) the behavioral health of vulnerable populations and 2) the ability of county behavioral health departments to provide mental health and SUD treatment in 2020 and 2021.

In January, BHAB sent a letter to the State Department of Health Care Services recommending that Mendocino county receive BHCIP Round 5 funding for the completion of the planned PHF.

BHAB approved the use of remote meetings in January and February.

BHAB Member Gorny approved by Board to serve as representative on CIT task force in February meeting.

BHAB Member Kaller approved by Board to serve as representative on RFP Stakeholder group in February meeting.

BHAB Member Bradley approved by Measure B Committee to serve as BHAB representative on Measure B Committee in March.

Approval of Audio-visual equipment approved unanimously.

BHAB Chair Behringer met with County Council regarding formation of Tribal Advisory Committee. A report of that meeting was generated and that report was submitted to BHAB members in the April meeting.

In April Superintendent Glentzer addressed the Board regarding the school district's work with the 20% of District Youth who have Adverse Childhood Experiences. The Director of Special Education discussed the counseling programs available for students. The need for BHAB and County to partner together more with the schools was suggested.

In May, BHAB had no quorum. Richard Towle resigned and new member, Mark Donegan was welcomed. The May Agenda included the NAMI Community Feedback Survey which asked "which facilities are currently the most needed in Mendocino County (please select two)." Of 383 respondents, almost 42% chose Adult Acute Psychiatric Center and 37% chose Dual Diagnosis Residential Treatment while 16% chose Sober Living Environment and 15% chose Crisis Stabilization Unit.

In June, the 2022 Annual Report was approved with Board recommended changes.

In June, the Board recommended the county investigate prices to purchase equipment to allow for set up of equipment in additional locations and via Zoom.

Perri Kaller was elected to Vice-Chair and Jo Bradley was elected to Treasurer in June.

Board discussion begun regarding adoption of AB817 which would indefinitely alter Brown Act teleconference restrictions for subsidiary boards.

County reported to BHAB in June that they had received 9.3 million for construction of the PHF.

In July, BHAB met in Covelo without a quorum. Despite the lack of a quorum, there was vigorous Public Comment. Comments included discussion regarding issues of mobile crisis services to Covelo and domestic violence services available; Yuki Trails members addressed the local need for whole person care; the need for more telehealth services; the need for County mental health and Tribes to work together on grants and the need for an increase in AA and NA services in the area. County reports to Board that PHF construction will begin March, 2024 and that the Administrative Services Organization (ASO) is being transferred to County from the agencies this month.

In September, Ford Street gave a presentation to the BHAB outlining their services and the planned expansion of their social detox. Their proposal includes a new treatment area and the building of a new 22 bed sober living dorm for men. Member Kaller reviewed with the Board the visit that she and Member Behringer made to Ford St.

In September, Member Gorny reports CIT training is increasing and that peer support trainees will begin training soon.

In September, County reports that since ASO was transferred to them, Redwood Community Services now reports directly to the County which entails additional workload for the County.

In September, BHAB discusses the size of the Board, the possible reduction in size to 10 members and the effect the lack of quorums has had on membership and the ability to conduct business.

In October, BHAB approved 2023-2024 CALBHB/C dues of \$700.00.

In October, BHAB previous Chair, Michelle Rich, was presented with an appreciation plaque for her years of service to the Board.

In October, BHAB heard from Jacque Williams, Executive Director, Ford Street Project asking the Board to recommend to BOS that needed funds are provided to both the Ford Street Expansion and to the new Behavioral Health Wing at the County Jail.

In October, Captain Joyce Spears, Mendocino County Sheriff, informed BHAB that the Jail would be requesting an additional 6 million dollars from BOS to complete the Behavioral Health wing.

In October, BHAB passed a motion requesting Member Bradley to vote at the next Measure B meeting that Measure B Funds go first to Ford Street Expansion and then to the Mendocino County Jail Behavioral Health Wing project.

In November a motion was passed authorizing an event to support partners and staff.

In November BOS approved a reduction in the size of BHAB to 11, with the possible addition of Measure B members to BHAB to streamline the board and reduce the number of members to more easily obtain a quorum. BHAB passed a motion unanimously to defer changes in BHAB bylaws and postpone 2024 elections until February 2024 meeting.

In November, a motion was passed unanimously to recommend to the BOS to review for approval of AB817 as part of their legislation.

In December, there was no quorum. County Council advised that no action could be taken on agenda items but discussion on agenda item updates and reports is permissible.

In December, Board Chair Behringer resigned as Chair of BHAB.

In December, a Retirement Certificate of Appreciation was awarded to Mary Alice Willeford for her 20 plus year of service to Mendocino County.

In December, Noel J. O'Neill, member of the California Behavioral Health Planning Council, gave a presentation to BHAB on the importance of performance outcome data and the compilation that is necessary for State planning that the Annual Data Notebook provides.

Included in the December minutes is an amended letter from the BOS written to the State in support of AB817.

## **ABOUT THE BOARD**

The Mendocino County Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB) serves as an advisory Board to the Board of Supervisors and the local Behavioral Health & Recovery Services Director. The Board is charged with a number of responsibilities, including: the duty to review and evaluate the community's public mental health needs; services; facilities and special problems in any facility within the county or jurisdiction where mental health evaluations or services are provided. The Board may review county agreements and make recommendations regarding items contained within these agreements.

BHAB began the year as a 15 member board that represents consumers, family members and the public. The Board began 2023 with 12 members and ended the year with 7 members. At the end of 2023 the County Board of Supervisor's adopted a resolution reducing the composition of BHAB to 11 members with one county supervisor as a voting member and a recommendation for dual participation by 5 members of the Measure B Committee. BHAB is committed to the constant improvement in the delivery of quality mental health care whose goals are recovery, human dignity and the opportunity for individuals to meet their full potential.

### **Meetings**

14 meetings were scheduled in 2023. 7 regular meetings were held in 2023. 5 meetings (including 1 special meeting) did not have a quorum and 2 meetings were canceled.

### **Committees**

BHAB currently has 9 Ad Hoc committees. Two new Committees were added in 2023 (CIT and RFP) and one removed (RFP). The following are the current Committees and their members at the end of 2023:

Appreciation Committee: Martin Martinez  
 Contracts Committee: Perri Kaller and Flinda Behringer  
 Data Notebook Committee: Flinda Behringer  
 Membership Committee: Flinda Behringer, Jo Bradley, Denise Gorny and Perri Kaller  
 Site Visit Committee: Flinda Behringer, Martin Martinez and Perri Kaller  
 Public Comment Follow-Up Committee: Martin Martinez and Jeff Shipp  
 CIT Committee: Denise Gorny  
 Tribal Advisory Committee: Martin Matinez  
 Nomination Committee: Flinda Behringer and Denise Gorny

**Board Members**

We began the year with 12 members and three vacancies, all in the 4<sup>th</sup> District. The Board is grateful to Mark Donegan for offering to serve as our Veteran member. Five members resigned this year: Cayo Alba, Laura Betts, Sergio Fuentes, Michelle Rich and Richard Towle. Per the new direction from the BOS to reduce our numbers to 11, we look forward to many changes in Board composition in 2024. Current Board members include:

|                                |                  |                                |                  |                                 |                  |
|--------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>1st District</b>            | <b>Term ends</b> | <b>3<sup>rd</sup> District</b> | <b>Term ends</b> | <b>5<sup>th</sup> District</b>  | <b>Term ends</b> |
| Denise Gorny                   | 4/1/24           | Perri Kaller                   | 12/31/25         | Flinda Behringer                | 8/1/25           |
| Lois Lockart                   | 12/31/24         | Jeff Shipp                     | 12/31/25         | Jo Bradley                      | 12/31/24         |
| Vacant                         | 2024             | Vacant                         | 2024             | Martin Martinez                 | 12/31/25         |
| <b>2<sup>nd</sup> District</b> | <b>Term ends</b> | <b>4<sup>th</sup> District</b> | <b>Term ends</b> | <b>Officers:</b>                |                  |
| Vacant                         | 2025             | Vacant                         | 2025             | Chair: Vacant                   |                  |
| Vacant                         | 2024             | Vacant                         | 2025             | Vice-Chair: Perri Kaller        |                  |
| Vacant                         | 2024             | Vacant                         | 2025             | Secretary/Treasurer: Jo Bradley |                  |

**BOS Supervisor:** Maureen Mulheren

**Recognition of Service**

BHAB would like to recognize the service of all of the staff members of the Mendocino County Behavioral Health Services, in particular for the consistent leadership of Dr. Jenine Miller and to Karen Lovato, Rena Ford and Dustin Thompson for their assistance in the completion of the Data Notebook. County behavioral staff and contracted agencies throughout the county continue to provide targeted treatment and assistance to clients and we appreciate their commitment to serving the behavioral health needs of individuals and families in Mendocino County.

BHAB would also like to recognize the guest speakers who took time to educate the Board about the needs and services in the county. These include: Veteran’s Art Project; Superintendent Glentzer; Jacque Williams, Ford Street Project; Captain Joyce Spears, Jail Expansion and Noel J. O’Neill, Data Notebook presentation.

Finally, BHAB would like to recognize and thank the Board members who resigned this year. They are: Cayo Alba, Sergio Fuentes, Michelle Rich and Richard Towle. We appreciate and thank them for their service on the board and their service to the community.

**THANK YOU!**

**ISSUES TO WATCH IN 2023**



In 2024, the issues that we expect to be important to monitor include: jail services; hold times before transfer to state hospitals; the need for an increase in State Hospital beds; the continued development of housing locally; staffing shortages; the increased need for clinical training programs; attention to the children's' system of care; relationships with schools; the effect of Proposition 1 on the distribution of MHSA dollars; the roll out of Care Court at the end of 2024; the effect on county resources of having to increase county services due to agency closures; the assumption by the county of the ASO and the implementation of CalAIM.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. There has been a noticeable fall off of stakeholders attending meetings and addressing the mental health needs of citizens of Mendocino County. BHAB should continue to work with the Measure B Committee on the following recommendations from the 2022 Annual Report:

A. Designate an ad hoc committee to make actionable recommendations for increasing adequately trained mental health professionals. For example, a psych tech program; student loan forgiveness programs; housing incentives for relocating; partnering with a research university to develop a pipeline of appropriate professionals (similar to the Adventist Health Residency program) and encouraging retention of existing employees through incentives and appreciation programs. The county had already provided a student incentive by releasing some MHSA dollars to pay student debt and Mendocino College is looking at a psych tech program in collaboration with Napa College. These efforts and others require increased Board and financial support.

B. We have made progress in providing housing for the seriously mentally ill. We recommend continuing the development of these housing options and hosting community meetings at the locations of proposed projects to address local community concerns. Passage of Proposition 1 will shift some MHSA dollars to housing.

C. Continue to monitor the use of Measure B funds through the audit as well as the development of a management plan to increase efficiency and transparency.

D. Address financing issues for the mild to moderate population and become knowledgeable about the systemic changes brought by CalAIM.

E. Focus on the need to increase the provision of SUD treatment and residential services. Overdose deaths increase year after year and there is an increase in Emergency Department visits related to adult alcohol and drug misuse. Since SUD facilities tend to be full, we recommend an increase in these facilities and more coordination between all SUDT programs. Mendocino County has social detox programs. We support working with the hospitals and agencies in the provision of medical detox services. BHAB membership was provided with a complete list of all SUDT providers that members can use to improve its planning proposals. More residential SUDT treatment is needed as is Dual Diagnosis Residential Treatment.

F. There continues to be an inadequate supply of psychiatrists in Mendocino County and many of their services are provided by Telehealth. Now that the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, we continue to see clients who prefer to obtain services through Telehealth. This trend is increasing as Telehealth worked well for adults and they are likely to continue this preference in the future.

2. Make a sustained effort with the assistance of the BOS and the Measure B Committee to recruit members to the BHAB, including, possibly, a school representative and a representative under the age of 25.
3. Continue to advocate for Measure B funding for the Ford Street Project in 2024.
4. There is a need for more crisis workers and more training opportunities for these workers as their work with law enforcement in assisting clients in getting appropriate mental health services and avoiding incarceration is working. The NAMI Survey showed that at least 15% of the respondents saw a need for Crisis Stabilization.
5. Among some of the reasons for the reduction in size of the BHAB were cost cutting measures, begun by the BOS due to a deficit. We encourage BHAB members and staff to use resources as efficiently as possible while providing needed service to the Board. We recommend that less documents be printed and that more information be transferred electronically and viewed electronically.

### **ADDENDA**

Data Notebook