



Sacramento County Mental Health Board

June 6, 2022

Sacramento County Board of Supervisors
700 H Street, Suite 2450
Sacramento, CA 95814

To: Sacramento County Board of Supervisors
Re: Mental Health Board Budget Recommendations

Honorable Supervisors:

The Sacramento County Mental Health Board's (MHB) statutory duties in the Welfare and Institutions Code Section 5604.2(a) include reviewing and evaluating the community's public mental health needs and services and advising the governing body and the local mental health director as to any aspect of the local mental program. Consistent with these duties, the MHB has reviewed the county budget for FY 2022-23. We have evaluated how it aligns with the policy and fiscal recommendations that we have made in the past and are making recommendations in support of growth proposals for county governments with an emphasis on Behavioral Health Services (BHS) programs.

Homelessness and Housing

The MHB has a history of supporting increased housing and mental health services for individuals with mental illness experiencing homelessness. In a letter to the Board of Supervisors (Board) dated 8/18/2020, we advocated for additional staffing for mental health programs serving individuals with mental illness experiencing homelessness and for mobile services that would increase their accessibility. In a letter to the Board dated 3/5/2021, after a severe weather event, we advocated for expanded access to warming/cooling shelters. Finally, in a letter to the Board dated 9/9/2021, in response to the Board's inquiry about the MHB's budget priorities for FY 2023-23, the MHB ranked housing, including supporting low and middle-income housing, affordable housing, and housing for currently unhoused people, and homelessness services and initiatives, including the homeless encampment initiative and trauma-informed services for people experiencing homelessness as two of its five top priorities. As a result of this long-standing support, the MHB supports the following growth proposals:

- DHS Encampment Team expansion (\$1.2M). DHS seeks this growth to deliver comprehensive street outreach and to connect individuals experiencing homelessness in the unincorporated areas of the county with shelter, housing, and behavioral health services
- Department of Human Assistance (\$360,000). Three additional scattered site houses, which will add 15 beds to the shelter system. These houses will serve individuals who reside unsheltered and vulnerable in our community by offering low-barrier entry, case management, and rehousing services
- Department of Human Assistance (\$740,000). Operate warming and cooling centers during severe weather events and provide mental health respite for unsheltered community members who are exposed to severe weather events

- Board of Supervisors approved projects from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) (\$17.8M). The Board has recommended approximately \$18M be appropriated for housing and homelessness in ARPA funds. The Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) in its letter dated March 11, 2022 on ways to promote sustainable reductions to Sacramento's jail population also supports the expenditure of ARPA funds on public and permanent supportive housing.

School-based Mental Health Services

In February 2022, the MHB issued its report, "Improving School-based Mental Health Services." The report highlighted grave concerns regarding students in Sacramento County at the 7th, 9th, and 11th grade levels. Over 35% of students at schools in the districts reported that they had chronic, sad, or hopeless feelings in the past 12 months. In addition, White, Hispanic or Latino, Mixed races, and female students had high rates of suicidal ideation, ranging from 20%-25%. Special populations, such as Transgender and Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual youth, had very elevated rates reaching 65%-70%.

Based on the significant needs of Sacramento County students for mental health services, we recommended in our report that the Sacramento Office of Education (SCOE) and the Department of Health Services (DHS) accelerate the expansion of the School-based Mental Health Program. Thus, the MHB strongly supports the recommendation for \$4.3M to expand the School-based Mental Health Program by 40 sites. The PHAB in its letter to the Board of Supervisors dated March 11, 2022 also supports collaboration with SCOE to enhance school-based mental health prevention and treatment services that build upon existing investments and programs.

Expanding Mental Health Services

The MHB supports all of the following growth proposals to the DHS budget that will result in increased availability of mental health services for clients in Sacramento County. The MHB believes that all mental health services must be culturally, ethnically, and linguistically relevant.

- Two new Full Service Partnerships (\$7.5M MHA funds): one serving adults and one serving families and children. If this request is not approved, BHS would not be able to fulfill permanent supportive housing commitments and requirements. Consequently, eligible clients would not be able to receive needed mental health treatment and support to live independently in the community
- Crisis Stabilization Units (\$5M). This 23-hour service seeks to resolve crises without having to hospitalize a client. If this request were not approved, this would result in avoidable risk of hospitalization, which would increase the cost to the county. It would also adversely affect the clients who might otherwise avoid an involuntary hospitalization
- Assisted Access (\$150,000 MHA funds). This program provides translation and interpreter services to facilitate access to mental health services. If this request were not approved, delays in providing timely services to monolingual clients would result
- Youth Detention Facility (YDF) (\$890,000). Provides longer term mental health services to youth committed to YDF. (\$135,000) Allows more on-site psychiatry time. If these requests are not approved, 40-50 young adults with complex mental health needs will not receive need mental health treatment

Need for Beds in the Behavioral Health Continuum of Care

In March 2022, RAND Health Care published "Psychiatric and Substance Use Disorder Bed Capacity, Need, and Shortage Estimate in Sacramento County, California." One key finding regarding psychiatric beds is that Sacramento County has a shortage of 253 subacute beds and 40 community residential beds for adults. It estimated a similar shortfall for children/youth of 28-32 beds at the subacute level and a considerably larger shortfall of between 64 and 130 beds exist at the community residential level.

In terms of psychiatric beds, BHS recommends focusing on addressing the shortage of beds at the subacute and community residential levels of care. One recommended solution would be to increase the number of beds at these levels of care by expanding infrastructure. The County should also consider alternatives that allow shifting the existing distribution of beds from higher to lower levels of care as needed. The MHB supports this approach to addressing the problem.

The report also addresses a shortage of substance use disorder (SUD) treatment beds, estimating that Sacramento County has a shortfall of 146 adult SUD beds, placing the county well below average at the state level (12.0 beds per 100,000 adults below of California's average rate of 46.2 beds per 100,000 adults) as well as the national level (8.5 beds per 100,000 adults below the national average of 42.7 beds per 100,000 adults). Among children/youth, the report found that the California and national benchmarks indicated a shortfall of 25 to 46 SUD treatment beds (6.7 and 12.4 per 100,000 children/youth, respectively).

The proposed budget for FY 2022-23 appropriates \$10M (\$5M Federal Financial Participation (FFP)) to add 156 residential treatment beds. The service gap is continuing to increase as there are currently over 450 clients on the residential placement list waiting on average over 100 days before securing a residential bed for treatment. To meet this critical need for services, the MHB supports this growth request.

Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF) Bed Rate Increases

PHFs provide acute hospitalization services. Two PHFs are experiencing increases in their beds rates, resulting in growth requests: Heritage Oaks Patient Enrichment (HOPE) (\$175,000) and two Crestwood facilities (\$737,000). FFP funds 50% of these growth requests. The MHB supports both of these growth requests. Maintaining PHF beds is integral to BHS's mission of reducing times patients wait in local emergency rooms for hospital placement. If Sacramento County does not increase its bed rate, other counties could pay a premium and compete more favorably for these beds, denying Sacramento County access. This lack of access could result in the County using more expensive acute care beds. Sacramento has historically spent a disproportionate amount on inpatient services, and strategies, such as maximizing the use of PHF beds, are an important cost control measure.

Mental Health Services Act Prevention and Early Intervention Services

The MHB supports the growth proposals to expand the Supporting Community Connections programs to include the Afghan community (\$149,000 MHSA funds) and the Farsi-speaking community (\$149,000 MHSA funds). Not approving these requests could result in prolonged suffering of these community members with untreated mental illness, who have experiences a high degree of trauma and acculturation stress.

Patients Rights' Advocates

The MHB supports this growth proposal to add more Patient Rights' Advocates (\$225,000). These advocates represent clients at involuntary commitment hearings under the Lanterman Petris Short (LPS) Act. This is an essential, state-mandated function. Noncompliance with this mandate could result in a lawsuit against the county, which may result in fines and penalties. These advocates are also essential to ensure that clients' civil rights are protected.

Wellness Crisis Call Center and Response Program (WCCCRP)

This growth request (\$246,000) is to purchase three vans for the three new teams responding to in-person calls to the WCCCRP. The MHB supports this growth request. The WCCCRP is a program that is an alternative to the 911 system so that Sacramento County residents can call a different phone number that will result in behavioral health personnel responding to crisis calls without law enforcement involvement. The MHB supports the development and implementation of this program.

Behavioral Health Services Administration

There are a number of growth requests related to the administration of Behavioral Health Services that the MHB supports because they increase the effectiveness and productivity of the division:

- MHSA contract processing (\$125,000 MHSA funds)
- PC refresh (\$400,000 MHSA funds) needed to replace out-of-date computer equipment
- Staff for billing and claiming (\$107,000) for private psychiatric hospitals and PHFs
- Contract with CalMHSA (\$64,000) for concurrent authorization/review for out-of-county inpatient hospitalization for Sacramento County beneficiaries
- Add funding for Behavioral Health Director (\$244,000). BHS is being reorganized. The Behavior Health Director was formerly classified as Deputy Director. Due to the scope, scale, complexity, and risk associated with this position, the position is being reclassified to Behavioral Health Director.

Public Defender

The MHB Adult System of Care Committee (ASOC) established a goal for 2022 to monitor and make appropriate recommendations regarding behavioral health services provided to individuals who have experienced incarceration in Sacramento County jail. The ASOC Committee endorses recommendations made by the PHAB in its letter to the Board of Supervisors dated March 11, 2022 on investments needed to promote sustainable reduction in the Sacramento County jail population. Specifically, the PHAB recommends that the Public Defender's Pretrial Support Program be expanded. This program has received national recognition for its comprehensive approach and demonstrated outcomes with just a 2% recidivism rate in its first year of operation. Based on PHAB's recommendation, the MHB supports the two growth proposals for the Public Defenders' Pretrial Support Program:

- \$48,000 for work space
- \$477,000 to expand the program to serve a greater number of people in the jail who could be released safely if connected to supportive services

Thank you for consideration of our recommendations. If you have any questions, please contact me at (916) 267-8667 or by email at LoranSheley@gmail.com.

Sincerely,



Loran Sheley, Chairperson
Sacramento County Mental Health Board

cc: Ryan Quist, PhD, Behavioral Health Director