

# BHYAB NEWSLETTER

Brought to you by Sacramento County's Behavioral Health Youth Advisory Board

*Mental Health Awareness Month*



*There is no health, without mental health.*

## Newsletter Highlights

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to you by:



# MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE ACCESSIBILITY PRESENTATION



On Tuesday, May 9th, four of the BHYAB board members presented their policy recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

"It was such a pleasure presenting to the Board of Supervisors. Creating these policies for the past two years have become such an important mission for the board and we members were ecstatic to show our final project. This policy brief has become our baby and we are hopeful that what's been developed is hopefully implemented so our youth can have proper access to the resources they need on a day-to-day basis."

*-Savanna Karmue, Chair | District 3*

"Talking to government leaders is not as scary as some might think. I am thankful to have felt support and encouragement by both the fellow board members and the Supervisors during our presentation, and I hope our work pays off!"

*-Natanya Kharat, Secretary | District 4*

***Special thanks to the following four BHYAB members for their outstanding presentations:***

- Savanna Karmue, Chair | District 3
- Jordan Kaitapu, Vice Chair | District 5
- Natanya Kharat, Secretary | District 4
- Radha Chauhan | Associate Member





# MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE ACCESSIBILITY PRESENTATION

In the 2021-2022 school year, 96% of public schools reported offering at least one type of mental health service to their students. Although services are offered, there is still a disconnect between services, as well as inequities in the distribution, advertisement, and utilization of these services. For example, SCOE is facing challenges placing 300 mental health practitioners on school sites due to the shortage in the mental health workforce. Since 2021, SCOE has placed 33 practitioners on school campuses.



It must be acknowledged that 65% of the student population comes from low-income families, therefore access to resources off-campus is unreachable. Our findings resulted in us developing our [Mental Health Resource Accessibility and Sustainability policy brief](#).

[READ POLICY BRIEF](#)

[WATCH THE BHYAB PRESENTATION](#)

\*SEE 1:08 FOR PRESENTATION



# MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE ACCESSIBILITY PRESENTATION

"I can't wait to see the changes the Supervisors will make. Just presenting in front of the Board of Supervisors and learning about how we can better the future for the youth of mental health makes me feel that we could achieve so many things to better ourselves and the behavioral youth of teens all around Sacramento."

*-Radha Chauhan | Associate Member*

*"Echoing the sentiment displayed at Camp Resolution: "Your words are hollow and useless if not backed up by action and change." I'm looking forward to seeing how our policy recommendations are adopted with*



time and put into practice so that youth in Sacramento County reap the benefits."

*-Jordan Kaitapu, Vice Chair | District 5*





# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AWARD RECIPIENTS

It is with great honor we highlight Jordan Kaitapu and Savanna Karmue for their dedication to Sacramento County. Jordan and Savanna volunteered many hours outside of their BHYAB commitment to board duties as well as community events.



Thank you, Dr. Ryan Quist, Sacramento County's Behavioral Health Director, for bestowing prestigious civic engagement awards to our members.



# BOARD MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Radha Chauhan | Associate Member

## *A Message from our BHYAB Board in Honor of Mental Health Awareness Month*

Over the last year, I have improved at motivating myself to do better. Not by relying only on validation from peers and teachers. Instead, I focus on my own needs in life for the future and work in general. My self-care involves learning new things or doing something that allows me to express my emotions, like writing and drawing.

When a friend is experiencing prolonged sadness, I try to understand their feelings and remind them how amazing they are. This is not all at once, but just complimenting them whenever I can.

If I find someone in a crisis, I first listen to what they are saying, offer reassurance, and try to keep social contact. I also find it very beneficial not to overwhelm the person or make assumptions.

In my time with the BHYAB, I've learned how there are many mental health programs in Sacramento that I've never heard of before, or even seen.

I've learned that **40%** of teens pass through prolonged sadness and how the pandemic had major effects on people both behaviorally and mentally.

Be mindful of the struggles people might be working through. Sometimes people's actions don't reflect what they feel. People may lose motivation and feel stuck. For me, the most effective way to help is to be physically there for them and let them talk about what they are facing when they are comfortable enough.

**Radha Chauhan,**  
**Associate Member**



### **JOIN THE BOARD!**

The BHYAB is looking to fill **FOUR** seats with two persons from District 1, and one person from Districts 2 and 5.

**APPLY NOW!**

*"Get comfortable with being uncomfortable."  
— Jillian Michaels*



# BOARD MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Ja'Lyn Wright | District 2

## *A Message from our BHYAB Board in Honor of Mental Health Awareness Month*

I have grown a lot in the last year. Preparing myself the best before transitioning to college. I am proud to announce I am pursuing a career in the mental health field.

When I am having a bad day my self-care routine includes working out, listening to music, and sleep. When someone else is having a bad day, I remind them: you are doing your best.

The BHYAB has increased my mental health awareness a lot. It has made me confident in advocating for it and getting into a career in it as well. Mental Health has always been around. People just don't pay any attention to it. Substance misuse is a common thing society has accepted and doesn't realize how damaging it is.

Mental health requires expressing your emotions. As an adult, you can't force a young person to explain it until they feel safe and are feeling free to do so without judgment.

For those who are experiencing a crisis or in need of resources and additional support, there are so many resources available for you.

The Source Sacramento offers free 24/7 support for those under the age 26. Call or text (916)-SUPPORT.

[VISIT THE SOURCE SACRAMENTO](#)

[OTHER WELLNESS RESOURCES](#)

**Ja'Lyn Wright**  
**District 2**



*“There is hope, even when your brain tells you there isn’t.” - John Green*



# BOARD MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Savanna Karmue, Chair | District 3

## *A Message from our BHYAB Board in Honor of Mental Health Awareness Month*

In the past year, I have noticed growth in my emotional and intellectual maturity. I've improved my decision-making skills and being able to handle challenging situations with grace while having a deeper understanding of myself and others. I've also shown more self-compassion, being kind and understanding towards myself and towards others. Some coping mechanisms I have for bad days include taking a break, giving myself permission to step away from whatever is causing me stress. Sometimes I take a walk outside or simply find a quiet place to sit and breathe. I also practice self-care days, reading my favorite book, or watching my favorite movie.

When comforting a friend experiencing prolonged sadness, the most important I've learned is to offer support and empathy. One thing I usually say is: "I'm here for you." Letting my friend know that I'm available to listen and provide support whenever they need it. I also say: "I can't fully understand what you're going through, but I want to help."

Acknowledge that sometimes I can't fully comprehend their experience, but I still express my willingness to assist in any way possible. Another thing I usually ask is "What can I do to support you right now?"

Roughly 50 percent of individuals with severe mental health challenges are affected by substance abuse. The BHYAB has increased my mental health awareness by showing me so many perspectives of mental health from different backgrounds I would have never been exposed to if I didn't become a part of the BHYAB. One thing I've learned about mental health is that youth depression rates have risen from 12.9% to 25.2% from pre-pandemic to 2021.

Some advice I have for adults when approaching youth mental health challenges are to: Educate yourself about common mental health issues affecting young people, create a safe and non-judgmental environment for open communication and take away the stigma around mental health, and be a good listener by providing a supportive and empathetic ear as sometimes youth just need an outlet to talk to without judgment or interruption so allow them to express their feelings and concerns without feeling rushed.

**Savanna Karmue,**  
**Chair**  
**District 3**



*"You don't have to control your thoughts. You just have to stop letting them control you."*

— Dan Millman





# BOARD MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Audrey Nunez | District 3

## A Message from our BHYAB Board in Honor of Mental Health Awareness Month

I am proud to announce I am beginning a fellowship at UC Davis Graduate School. My self-care practices are getting a pedicure, hanging out with good supportive friends, avoiding toxic relationships, and setting healthy boundaries.

The BHYAB has pointed me in the direction to take youth mental health first-aid training. When those around me are struggling, I always suggest referring to a doctor or specialist, to find the help they need. I remind them "I am always here for you".

For those supporting people in crisis, use the **ALGEE** technique from mental health first-aid training.

- Assess for Risk
- Listen Nonjudgmentally
- Give Reassurance and Information
- Encourage Appropriate Professional Help
- Encourage Self-Help and Other Support Strategies

### ALGEE: THE ACTION PLAN

- ASSESS for risk of suicide or harm.
- LISTEN non-judgmentally.
- GIVE re-assurance and information.
- ENCOURAGE appropriate professional help.
- ENCOURAGE self-help and other support strategies.

For adults looking to support youth on their mental health journeys: listen more, talk less, and get youth mental health first aid training. Expand your mental health education today with [NAMI](#). Access NAMI's educational courses, presentations, and advocacy & wellbeing programs.

[VISIT NAMI SACRAMENTO](#)

**Audrey Nunez,**  
**District 3**



*"Vulnerability sounds like truth and feels like courage. Truth and courage aren't always comfortable, but they're never weakness."*

*- Brené Brown*



# BOARD MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Natanya Kharat, Secretary | District 4

## *A Message from our BHYAB Board in Honor of Mental Health Awareness Month*

I had gone through more rough patches than I had expected over the past year, but I am incredibly glad that I have come out of them feeling more confident and reassured in myself than ever.

I am so thankful for all the opportunities I've received to learn and grow, and I am super excited about my future after high school. My self-care routine involves journaling, practicing gratitude, and getting a good night's sleep.

Struggling with negative thoughts is hard, but it does not have to stay that way. Whatever you're going through, know that you are loved, and you are not alone.

Sometimes, people may want to be alone in their own space. Listen to the person, express your care and support for them, and ask how you can help. You can also encourage them to seek professional support.

Mental health challenges are much more common than we think, especially among youth. Simply having conversations around it is amazing, which can decrease the stigma and negative connotations around it. Education plays a crucial role in prevention. We need to prioritize protecting youth.

As part of the BHYAB, I've learned a lot about the need for mental health resource accessibility and sustainability and the role that advocacy plays in achieving it.

Oftentimes, youth prefer going to their fellow peers before talking to an adult about mental health. It is important that youth feel safe, respected, and cared for in their challenges.

**Natanya Kharat,**  
**Secretary,**  
**District 3**



*"One is loved because one is loved.  
No reason is needed for loving."  
- Paulo Coelho, The Alchemist*





# BOARD MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Ria Srivastava | District 4

## *A Message from our BHYAB Board in Honor of Mental Health Awareness Month*

This past year, apart from graduating high school, I've seen the most growth in myself emotionally. I've learned the importance of giving myself the time and space to heal from hardships and surrounding myself only with the people and practices that bring positivity to my life. I feel like a much more fulfilled and happier individual than I was a year ago.

To cope with bad days, I am first and foremost patient with myself. I allow myself to feel whatever negative emotion I am experiencing, rather than suppressing it. I try to surround myself with things that make me happy — friends, family, nature. When possible, I try to give myself breaks from whatever responsibilities I have that day, whether it be a ten-minute break during studying or not picking up an extra shift at work. I often write in order to make sense of the complexity.

To a friend that's experiencing prolonged sadness, I would first share that I have overcome something similar, and that at one point, it seemed insurmountable to me, too. I would offer a listening ear, validating their experiences, and only offering my own opinion or advice when asked for it directly. I would help them come up with a plan or coping mechanisms to help deal with the symptoms of depression.

When helping someone in crisis, it is essential to remain calm and attentive. Depending on the severity of the situation, contacting non-law enforcement mental health resources may be necessary to protect both your own safety and the safety of the individual. I would validate the individual's experiencing, empathizing with their emotions.

The BHYAB has given me the opportunity to understand mental health in a far broader context than just my own experience. From getting to interact with people of all ages, backgrounds, and stories, I've really seen the diversity of mental health needs.

This is not a new learning per-say, but the importance of remaining empathetic with individuals struggling with substance use has become more evident to me now than ever. Individuals struggling with substance use deserve respect and autonomy.

I often hear the sentiment that our generation struggles more with mental health either because we are "too sensitive" or because of the growing impact of technology. As for the former, our generation is lucky to have the diagnoses to identify the same mental health issues that have existed forever. We have broken down stigmas and are less afraid to be vulnerable about our mental health. This has nothing to do with sensitivity.

As for the latter, technology has a major impact on our mental health, but there are also a slough of other factors that make our young lives far different than those of any other generation. Approach our challenges with a desire to understand and empathize, rather than make broad strokes over a nuanced and complex issues.

**Ria Srivastava,  
District 4**



*Don't forget to take care of yourself while  
you take care of the world.*



# BOARD MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Jordan Kaitapu, Vice Chair | District 5

## *A Message from our BHYAB Board in Honor of Mental Health Awareness Month*

The BHYAB gave me opportunities to network and collaborate with youth of various backgrounds. I was able to get a better understanding of how mental health is perceived and dealt with in different cultures. I learned more about adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) as well.

Over the last year, I have continued to grow as a youth advocate and have been fortunate enough to gain more experience that is imperative to my personal mission of supporting and uplifting Black youth in and out of classrooms. When having a bad day, I either like to stay busy to keep me focused on my goals or conversely, when my schedule allows it, I rest and take extra time to regroup.

If someone I knew was dealing with prolonged sadness, I would tell them: It is never easy dealing with obstacles or barriers that are put in your way, especially when it feels like there is no way around it or through it. You are loved and cared for. You don't have to carry that weight on your own. If you need anything, please don't hesitate to reach out on your own time.

Depending on the individual, sometimes being present is all someone in crisis wants at the moment. In other cases, they might need additional support through something like the Community Wellness Response Team (which won't criminalize them for being in a crisis).

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

"Sacramento County incarcerates individuals with mental health conditions at a rate 47% higher than other comparable sized counties in our state. Recent data from the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office shows that people inside the jail that have a mental health diagnosis and receive mental health services during harsher incarceration comprised 63% of the average daily population."

- Dr. Corrine McIntosh Sako on CRISJ Building Justice Podcast's Episode "No New Sac Jail--We Need Treatment, Not Trauma."

**Jordan Kaitapu,  
Vice Chair,  
District 5**



***Racism affects mental health.***





# OTHER NEWS

## Youth Opportunities

The Steinberg Institute is currently conducting youth and parent surveys on youth mental health and technology. Insights gained from the survey will ultimately inform the California Department of Health Care Services in their work on improving youth mental health services.

Anyone ages 13-21 (or the parent of a young person ages 13-21), please consider taking 20 minutes to complete the survey.

[TAKE THE SURVEY](#)

Your input will benefit the next generation of young Californians and you will be offered a \$5 or \$10 gift card for your participation, as well as the chance to win one \$500 gift card.

## Other Resources

Sacramento County has a behavioral health services webpage just for youth.

[VIEW MORE SERVICES](#)

In California, those 12 years of age or older may consent to mental health treatment or counseling services if, in the opinion of the attending professional person, the minor is mature enough to participate intelligently in the mental health treatment or counseling services (Health & Safety Code § 124260).

Learn more about your rights. Knowledgeable youth are empowered youth.

Special thanks to the BHYAB Partners:

