



# California Behavioral Health Planning Council

ADVOCACY • EVALUATION • INCLUSION

## 2023 Year-End Report

January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023

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## Overview

The [California Behavioral Health Planning Council](#) (Council) is a 40-member body that serves to advise the California administration, legislature, and local mental/behavioral health boards on policies, regulations, and priorities for California's publicly funded behavioral health system. The Council is mandated in [Public Law 103-321](#) to exist as a condition of the Mental Health Block Grant funding distributed by the Federal government to the state of California. The Council is authorized in [Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\)](#) to review and evaluate the effectiveness and adequacy of the public behavioral health system and to advocate for persons with lived experience of Serious Mental Illness (SMI), children with Serious Emotional Disturbances (SED), and their families. We advocate for an accountable system of care that is responsive, strength-based, consumer and family-member-driven, recovery-oriented, culturally and linguistically responsive, and cost-effective.

## ABOUT OUR COUNCIL MEMBERS

Council Members apply for appointment by the Department of Health Care Services to the Council as volunteers for three-year terms. [Current members](#) include direct consumers, family members, parents of children with Severe Emotional Disturbance (SED), consumer-related advocates, professional/providers, and State department representatives from Social Services, Housing & Community Development, Education, Corrections & Rehabilitation, Health Care Services, Aging, Rehabilitation, and Health & Human Services Agency.

### 2023 Council Members

Karen Baylor	Jessica Grove	Dale Mueller
John Black	Celeste Hunter	Noel O'Neill
Stephanie Blake	Veronica Kelley	Liz Oseguera
Monica Caffey	Steve Leoni	Vandana Pant
Erika Cristo	Barbara Mitchell	Deborah Pitts
Erin Franco	Catherine Moore	Darlene Prettyman
Christine Frey	Javier Moreno	Marina Rangel

Joanna Rodriguez  
Daphne Shaw  
Walter Shwe  
Deborah Starkey

Arden Tucker  
Tony Vartan  
Cindy Wang  
Susan Wilson

Angelina Woodberry  
Uma Zykofsky



(Photo: October 2023 General Session)

## COUNCIL ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN REVIEW

The Council held quarterly meetings across the state in January, April, June, and October to focus on addressing the behavioral health needs of Californians with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) and children with Severe Emotional Disturbances (SED). In addition, the Council joined multiple statewide advisory groups improving statewide collaboration. The Council is currently represented at the California Health & Human Services Agency (CalHHS) [CARE Act Working Group](#), CalHHS CARE Act Ad Hoc Working Groups, CalHHS Behavioral Health Task Force, and the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) AB 2242 Committee.

### Council accomplishments included:

- Prioritization of Behavioral Health Integration by adding a substance use disorder workgroup.
- Increased participation in statewide behavioral health advisory groups.

- Taking positions on 15 pieces of legislation.
- Responding to DHCS on 8 Behavioral Health Information Notices.
- Submission of letters of recommendation to DHCS on
  - [CalAIM Behavioral Health Administration Integration Concept Paper](#)
  - [The California Behavioral Health Community-Based Continuum \(Cal-BH-CBC\) Concept Paper](#)
  - [California Behavioral Health Community-Based Organized Networks of Equitable Care and Treatment \(BH-CONNECT\) 1115 Demonstration](#)
- Release of the [“Patient Rights Advocacy in California: Analysis and Recommendations”](#) report.
- Completion of the 2022 [Data Notebook Project](#) Overview Report: Impact of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency on Behavioral Health Needs and Provision of Services in California.
- [Seven Public Forums](#) on the proposed Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA).

## COMMITTEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Council committees are structured around six priority areas including: [Housing and Homelessness](#), [Legislation and Public Policy](#), [Patients’ Rights](#), [Performance Outcomes](#), [Systems and Medicaid](#), and [Workforce and Employment](#). In addition, there are three workgroups that address interdisciplinary issues that affect the focus areas of multiple committees. These [workgroups](#), Children & Youth, Reducing Disparities, and Substance Use Disorder (SUD), provide a less formal environment for members to discuss topics of interest to bring back to the committees to ensure key issues and priorities in these topic areas are addressed.

### Housing and Homelessness Committee

The Housing and Homelessness Committee (HHC) continued to advocate for appropriate funding for Adult Residential Facilities (ARFs) which continue to close, resulting in a loss of beds for behavioral health consumers who need that level of care, despite recent funding intended to address the issue. The HHC, California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards and Commissions (CALBHB/C), and California Behavioral Health Director’s Association (CBHDA) are working together to advocate for ARFs and identify potential solutions to recommend in 2024.

The HHC held a listening session on April 11, 2023, to hear directly from unhoused and formerly unhoused persons with lived experience of serious mental illness about their housing needs and challenges. There were approximately 70 persons in attendance which included consumers of the public behavioral health system, stakeholders, community partners, and providers. Attendees with lived experience shared their unique struggles in navigating the housing system to obtain permanent housing. Consumer-focused behavioral health organizations also shared their perspectives. As a result of the listening session, the HHC is working on a resource document for unhoused behavioral health consumers and using the information to guide future work of the HHC.

## **Legislation and Public Policy Committee**

During the first year of the 2023-2024 legislative session, the Legislation and Public Policy Committee (LPPC) took positions on 15 pieces of legislation which are outlined in our [2023 Year-End Legislative Report](#). The committee continued to focus on legislation that falls under two of the Council's key overarching principles:

- To uphold the principles and practices of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA).
- To promote appropriate services to be delivered in the least restrictive setting possible.

Two key pieces of legislation the committee followed were Senate Bill 326 (Eggman) and Assembly Bill 531 (Irwin). Senate Bill 326 revises and recasts the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) as the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) and Assembly Bill 531 creates the Behavioral Health Infrastructure Bond Act of 2024 (Bond). Although formal positions were not taken on these bills, the Council submitted [redline edits](#) and [letters](#) outlining the Council's concerns at various stages of the legislative cycle. Additionally, the Council hosted public forums across the state to solicit feedback from stakeholders and submitted the information gathered to the California Health and Human Services Agency. SB 326 and AB 531 will appear jointly on the March 2024 ballot as Proposition 1.

The committee continued to track the implementation of recent legislation that impacts conservatorship laws, including Assembly Bill 1338 Care Act (2022). Additionally, the committee took an oppose position on Senate Bill 43 (Eggman) and voiced the Council's

position at legislative hearings and in the [March 2023 position letter](#). Senate Bill 43 expands the definition under the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act (LPS Act) of "gravely disabled," for purposes of involuntarily detaining an individual, to also include a condition in which a person, as a result of a mental health disorder or a substance use disorder (SUD), or both, is at substantial risk of serious harm, as defined, or is currently experiencing serious harm to their physical or mental health. Despite the Council and many other organizations opposing this bill, it was signed into law on October 10, 2023.

## **Patients' Rights Committee**

The Patients' Rights Committee (PRC) released a report in April 2023 titled "[Patients' Rights Advocacy in California: Analysis and Recommendations](#)." This report provides a brief overview of the duties of patients' rights advocates, summarizes the PRC's work regarding patients' rights advocacy from 2017 to 2022, identifies some of the current issues in this field, and provides recommendations for addressing these issues. The report can be found on the Planning Council website.

The Patients' Rights Committee tracked the progression and implementation of significant behavioral health legislation that will impact the behavioral health system.

This includes:

- SB 43 (Eggman), passed in October 2023, which expands the definition of "gravely disabled." This bill was opposed by the PRC, as well as Disability Rights California.
- SB 326 and AB 531, which will have broad impact on the behavioral health system as a whole.
- The implementation of the CARE Act in the first cohort of California counties.

## **Performance Outcomes Committee**

The Performance Outcomes Committee fulfills the Council's responsibilities in Welfare and Institutions Code Section 5772 (c) to review program performance, to review and approve performance outcomes measures, and to report findings and recommendations on performance of programs annually to the Legislature, Department of Health Care Services and the local behavioral health boards and commissions. The primary vehicle for accomplishing this is the Data Notebook which the Council releases through this committee annually. Some key activities related to the Data Notebook are listed below.

- The [overview report for the 2021 Data Notebook on the Role of Health Equity in Behavioral Health](#) was published in January 2023. This report can be found on the Planning Council website, as well as the CALBHBC website.
- The committee received a record number of responses for the 2022 Data Notebook survey, with 52 counties responding, representing 90.5% of the total population of California. The topic of focus for this data notebook is “The Impact of the Covid-19 Public Health Emergency on Behavioral Health Needs and Services in California.” The overview report and executive summary for the 2023 Data Notebook will be published soon.
- The committee selected the topic of Stakeholder Engagement in the Public Behavioral Health System for the 2023 Data Notebook. The committee is currently collecting survey responses from counties for this Data Notebook.

Members of the Performance Outcomes committee played key roles in planning and facilitating the Planning Council’s public forums for SB 326 across the state.

## **Systems and Medicaid Committee**

The Systems and Medicaid Committee (SMC) provided feedback to the Department of Health Care Services on various Medi-Cal behavioral health policies and initiatives. This includes responses to 8 Behavioral Health Information Notices (BHINs) and 3 recommendation letters pertaining to topics such as the BH-CONNECT 1115 Demonstration Waiver, policies under the CalAIM Initiative such as the administrative integration of mental health and substance use disorder services, DMC-ODS requirements, documentation redesign, and the elimination of cost-reporting requirements. The committee also provided feedback on policies regarding Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) between Managed Care Plans and County Mental Health Plans and obligations related to Indian health care providers.

This year the SMC focused on evaluation of the children’s system of care by engaging with partner organizations on topics such as Short-Term Residential Treatment Programs (STRTPs), the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI), and the county



and provider perspectives of the challenges and systematic needs of children and youth throughout the state. The SMC also explored digital and physical platforms for children and youth navigating mental health and substance use disorders.

Invited guests included:

- California Alliance of Child and Family Services (CACFS)
- County Behavioral Health Directors Association (CBHDA)
- CA Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies (CBHA),
- CA Health and Human Services (CalHHS),
- County Behavioral Health Departments
- Sutter Health
- Allcove

The SMC continues to engage with state, county, and provider level representatives to discuss the implications of CalAIM behavioral health initiatives and how they will operate in practice at the local level.

## **Workforce and Employment Committee**

The Workforce and Employment Committee (WEC) tracked the development and implementation of the Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialist Certification throughout the year. WEC organized a panel presentation for the Council's January 2023 General Session that included California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA), DHCS, California Mental Health Peer-Run Organizations (CAMHPRO), and Cal Voices. CBHPC was recognized as a neutral place and a safe space for the peer community to discuss implementation issues with the agencies responsible for implementation and the Council. In 2023, WEC also provided [feedback to CalMHSA](#) on the core competencies for the areas of specialization and received quarterly implementation updates from DHCS and CalMHSA.

The WEC also focused on highlighting successful employment programs for persons with lived experience of serious mental illness (SMI) and invited representatives from various employment models throughout the state. The committee was informed on the Individual



Placement and Support (IPS), Social Enterprise, and Clubhouse models as well as the best practices and limitations of each model.

The committee gathered a panel of representatives from the five Regional Partnerships participating in the 2020-2025 Workforce Education and Training (WET) Plan to provide an overview of their programs and discuss the strengths, best practices, and challenges of implementation. The Regional Partnerships addressed the [questions](#) developed by the committee.

The WEC continued to advocate for and track the status of Occupational Therapists (OTs) to be added as Licensed Mental Health Professionals (LMHPs) in the Specialty Mental Health Services System (SMHS) and as Licensed Practitioners of the Healing Arts (LPHAs) in the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS). The WEC submitted a [letter](#) to the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) in support of this request in November 2022 and a member from the committee has met with DHCS on a regular basis to follow-up on this request. In August 2023, a [public notice](#) was released indicating that DHCS is submitting a State Plan Amendment to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that includes OTs as LMHPs in the SMHS and as LPHAs in the DMC-ODS.

## Conclusion

The Council recognizes and appreciates the commitment of California's leadership to addressing the behavioral health needs of Californians receiving services through the publicly funded system of care. As we review and evaluate the expanding public behavioral health system, we are limited to existing resources making it difficult at times to dive deep into each priority area and include the many initiatives and services added to the public behavioral health system in recent years.

The Council is the largest behavioral health advisory body statewide and the only one with a majority consumer and family member composition. The knowledge, expertise, and passion of the Council uniquely position us to advise the administration on the

effectiveness and adequacy of services statewide and at the local level. For this reason, the Council has been proactive in connecting with State Department leaders, and legislators, and has joined other statewide advisory groups. Our hope is that the administration prioritizes the voice of persons with lived experience and considers utilizing this existing state resource to its full capacity before creating duplicative advisory bodies. A small expansion of staff would allow the Council to address the many new components of the system that fall under our existing mandates in public law and welfare and institutions code and would be more cost-effective than creating additional advisory bodies. The Council is also well suited to engage in a meaningful way with Californians who utilize services and provide that information along with recommendations to the administration during the development and/or implantation of new programs, services, and policies.

## Contact Us

For questions or more detailed information about any of the actions, projects or committees mentioned in this report, please contact us at 916-701-8211. You may also visit our [website](#) or [Facebook](#) page.

## 2024 Council Meeting Schedule

January 16-19, 2024: [Courtyard by Marriott San Diego Old Town](#), San Diego, CA

April 16-19, 2024: [Holiday Inn Sacramento Downtown - Arena](#), Sacramento, CA

June 18-21, 2024: [Lake Arrowhead Resort](#), Lake Arrowhead, CA

October 15-18, 2024: [Embassy Suites by Hilton Milpitas Silicon Valley](#), Milpitas, CA