



County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DIVISION

**MINUTES – Approved
August 20, 2026**

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD

JULY 16, 2026, 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM

SOUTH COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER, 500 WESTRIDGE, COMMUNITY ROOM, WATSONVILLE
MICROSOFT TEAMS (831) 454-2222, CONFERENCE 947 895 716#



Salud Mental y
Tratamiento del Uso
de Sustancias

Present: Antonio Rivas, Dan Barnett, Dean Kashino, Hugh McCormick, Jeffrey Arlt, Kaelin
Wagnermarsh, Michael Neidig, Natalie Stott, Rachel Montoya, Valerie Webb
Absent: Xaloc Cabanes, Supervisor De Serpa
Staff: Marni Sandoval, Jane Batoon-Kurovski

-
- I. Roll Call – Quorum present. Meeting called to order at 3:11 p.m. by Co-Chair Mike Neidig.
 - II. Public Comment – No public comments.
 - III. Board Member Announcements – None.
 - IV. Approve June 18, 2026 Minutes
Motion / Second: Dean Kashino / Antonio Rivas
Ayes: Rivas, Kashino, McCormick, Arlt, Wagnermarsh, Neidig, Stott, Montoya, Webb
Absent: Barnett –joined meeting at 4:04pm.
Nays: None
Passed.
 - V. Secretary's Report
– No attendance or training issues were reported.
 - VI. Patient's Rights Report – George Carvalho, Advocate for Advocacy, Inc.
The June report was provided. George attended the meeting.
George noted he uses AI only for editing and formatting reports, not for documenting client conversations.
Board discussion:
 - Members discussed advocacy services for youth in Juvenile Hall. George stated he provides services when requested.
 - Members discussed the lack of comparable data on behavioral health incidents in county jails versus treatment facilities. George stated he doesn't have direct information and doesn't track the information.
 - Dr. Sandoval shared that the Sheriff's Office, Probation, and BH are implementing a countywide data-sharing system, funded by the state, to improve tracking of shared populations and behavioral health outcomes.
 - George answered questions regarding an individual Telecare case and clarified that AB2275 requires patient rights notification for consecutive 5150 holds but was unaware of any upcoming legislative changes.

VII. Behavioral Health Director's Report – Dr. Marni Sandoval, Behavioral Health Director

1. Adult System of Care (ASOC) Update

- Program & Clinical Readiness

- Prepared for July 1 BHSA changes.
- Launched new FSP teams and Level-of-care tools.
- Organized client assignments and began transitions and consent processes.
- Updated the on-call response system (effective 07/01/26).
- Continued implementing Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) and Forensic ACT.
- Completed contract renewals and established new treatment authorization workflows.

- Operational Projects & Staffing

- Supported openings of Bridge House, Low Barrier Navigation Center, and Harvey West Studios (No Place Like Home permanent supportive housing).
- Collaborated with Housing for Health and Housing Matters.
- Established BH offices at Bridge House with dedication stabilization and housing planning space.
- Planned program opening celebrations for the next BHAB update.
- Welcomed new Sr. BH Program Manager Jorge Duque, LCSW.

2. Children's System of Care (CSOC) Update – BHSA Transition

- Staff trained on new BHSA levels of care.
- Launched Standard Outpatient and FSP Level 1 (ICM).
- Implemented updated ISS eligibility and FSP consent forms.
- Activated new EHR/Avatar programs for each level of care.
- Collaborated with Probation, Child Welfare, and Encompass.
- Submitted High-Fidelity Wraparound (FSP Level 2) certification applications.
- Motion to invite representatives from Pajaro Valley Unified School District (and potentially the County Office of Education at a future meeting) to present on school-based mental health services and current challenges.

Motion / Second: Kaelin Wagnermarsh / Antonio Rivas

Ayes: Rivas, Barnett, Kashino, McCormick, Arlt, Wagnermarsh, Neidig, Stott, Montoya, Webb

Nayes: None

Passed.

3. Substance Use Disorder Services Update

- a. Four Narcan distribution boxes were installed, including one at Bridge Housing.
- b. New Life opened a seven-bed women's Recovery Residence, bringing the community total to 49 Recovery Residence beds.
- c. Janus is launching a new mobile Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) and Narcotic Treatment Program (NTP) van to improve access in unincorporated areas.

4. Behavioral Health Integration

- a. Continued integration of substance use disorder services into Behavioral Health.
- b. Previously separate substance use teams have been embedded within adult, children, and access systems of care to provide more coordinated, whole-person treatment.

VIII. Site Visit Committee Update

- Juvenile Hall – unable to connect to set up day/time for site visit.
- Community Connections offered a site visit to its Harvey West location on August 12th at 12:30pm.

- IX. Funding Ad Hoc Committee
- Committee presented recommendations focused on measurable outcomes tied to new investments, including:
 - Expanding mental health and substance use treatment capacity over the next three years.
 - Reducing the amount of time justice-involved individuals wait for behavioral health treatment.
 - Members noted that behavioral health funding remains highly fragmented, dependent on multiple grants and changing state funding streams.
 - The committee emphasized the continued need for strong advocacy at the county, state, and federal levels.
 - Members highlighted Arizona's centralized Medicaid funding model as an example of a simpler, more coordinated system.
 - The committee concluded that despite funding challenges, Santa Cruz County has an opportunity to significantly improve its behavioral health system over the coming years through collaboration, strategic planning, and sustained advocacy.
- X. Jail Packet Review – Hugh McCormick
- Requested BHAB feedback on the review of the jail packet.
 - Clarified that the document is an independent product and does not represent County Behavioral Health.
 - Announced that disclaimers will be included to clearly identify statements and sections that reflect the author's opinions.
- XI. "The Stages of Change" Continuum of Care – Mike Neidig
- Presented an overview of the Stages of Change model (Pre-contemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, Action, and Maintenance).
 - The presentation emphasized that effective behavioral health services should match an individual's stage of readiness for change, not just their level of clinical need.
 - Members discussed the importance of motivation, engagement, and individualized interventions.
- Board discussion included:
- Applying the Stages of Change model to individuals with severe mental illness, justice-involved populations, and those under involuntary treatment.
 - Members shared perspectives on voluntary versus involuntary treatment and patient engagement.
 - Emphasized that recovery is often non-linear and that participation is essential to successful treatment.
- XII. Future Agenda Items
- Board Retreat – discussion on future presentation topics and Grand Jury Report.
- XIII. Adjournment
- Meeting adjourned at 5:02pm.