



DIRECTOR'S NEWSLETTER: Year in Review



Dr. Jei Africa

What a busy year 2025 has been! We implemented significant efforts including [CalAIM](#), the state's reformation of Medi-Cal, [Proposition 1](#), a re-envisioning of public mental health and substance use services, and the BHRS transformation journey, a strategic vision that reshapes the way we provide care across our behavioral health system. In addition, we are monitoring federal changes (HR 1, for example) and their implications statewide and locally. In partnership with community, providers and other stakeholders, our commitment remains to serve the most vulnerable

communities. As we bid farewell to 2025, we look to 2026 with optimism and a sense of renewed hope. Thank you to each of you who have helped change people's lives for the better.

2025 Highlights

BHRS Workforce Updates

**66 New Staff
Members
Since January
2025**

Positions include:

- **1** Adult and **1** Child Psychiatrist
- **4** Community Mental Health Nurses
- **13** Interns
- **14** Marriage and Family Therapists
- **2** Peer Support Workers
- **6** Psychiatric Social Workers

January

The SMC Board of Supervisors reaffirmed its commitment to equity, safety and inclusion for all communities, assuring the public that values and local protections have not changed in the face of new federal priorities.

February

The BHRS Services and Programs Guide is published! This is a comprehensive, one stop resource for BHRS services and offerings in San Mateo County. It includes behavioral health services and program descriptions, contact information and how to request services.

March

BHRS ODE hosts the San Mateo County Cesar Chavez Event on March 28 with Ayudando Latinos a Sonar (ALAS) and Voices of Recovery. The event celebrated Cesar Chavez's commitment to advocating for the rights of people of color, ensuring they have the dignity and fairness to earn, live, and work.

April	The San Mateo County <u>Overdose Prevention Coalition</u> holds its first Steering Committee meeting at College of San Mateo. The Coalition has had a busy year hosting community meet & greets, launching the <u>Naloxone Stand Box distribution project</u> and more.
May	As part of Mental Health Awareness Month, BHRS launched an outreach campaign, developed with community input, to raise awareness of the <u>Mobile Crisis Response Team</u> and how to access it via the San Mateo County Crisis Line at (650) 579-0350.
June	The Co-Occurring Consult Group, a monthly learning opportunity providing resources for co-occurring substance use and mental health care and case consultation, held its first meeting in June for BHRS providers.
July	The San Mateo County <u>Psychiatry Residency Training Program</u>, the first community psychiatry program in the nation, celebrated its 60th anniversary! Plus, the one year anniversary of the implementation of <u>CARE Court</u> in San Mateo County.
August	BHRS hosted the first staff Town Hall on the <u>Transformation Journey</u> to help learn and plan how we can best meet the needs of our clients and workforce in the changing behavioral health landscape.
September	The SMC Board of Supervisor's held a <u>BHRS study session</u> (4:35:00) where Dr. Africa discussed BHRS services, staffing, client demographics and budget. The session emphasized BHRS's adjustments to state and federal changes to provide specialty mental health and substance use disorder treatment for Medi-Cal beneficiaries.
October	The 18th Annual Housing Hero Awards recognized community partners and colleagues for providing and/or maintaining housing for SMC residents with mental health and substance use issues. Plus, BHRS ODE won the first-ever <u>2025 Countywide Dance-Off Video Competition!</u>
November	BHRS published its inaugural <u>Annual Report</u>, highlighting our Fiscal Year 2024-25 efforts!
December	<u>Proposition 36</u>, the Homelessness, Drug Addictions, and Theft Reduction Act, has been implemented in San Mateo County for one year. BHRS has received 44 referrals to date and there are 15 clients currently in treatment.

2025 Clients Served

From January to September 2025...



BHRS **served 12,738 clients**. 11,489 clients accessed mental health services and 2,031 accessed alcohol and other drug services.



The Access Call Center received **13,303** calls.



17.3% (2,201) of clients **experienced homelessness**. 48.8% (992) of clients who accessed alcohol and other drug services experienced homelessness, while 14.7% (1,689) of clients who accessed mental health services experienced homelessness.



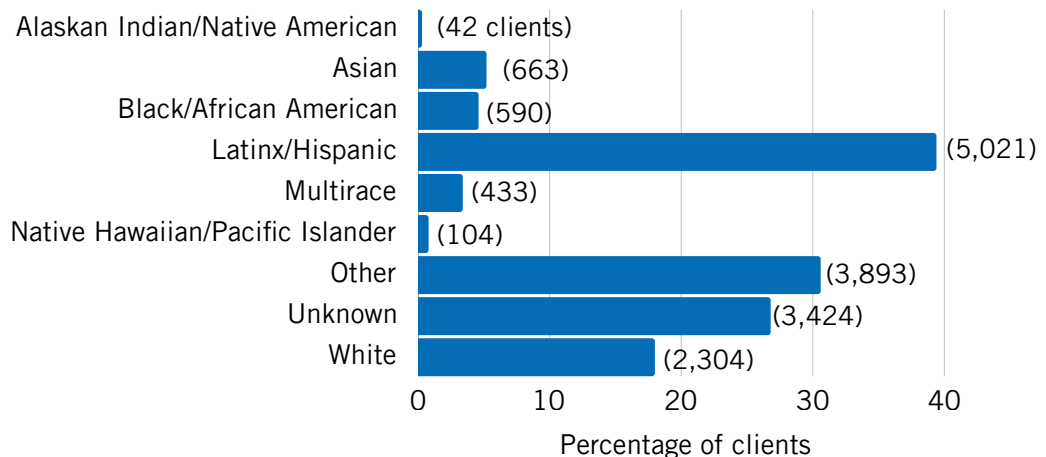
Gender Identity*

37.0% (4,721) Male
32.7% (4,167) Female
0.3% (38) Transgender Female
0.3% (36) Another
0.3% (34) Transgender Male
0.2% (30) Genderqueer
31.8% (4,044) Unknown

*Clients may be counted in more than one category because their gender identity may have changed over time.

Race/Ethnicity*

*Data includes individuals who identified with a particular race or ethnicity category, either solely by itself or in combination with another race or ethnicity category.

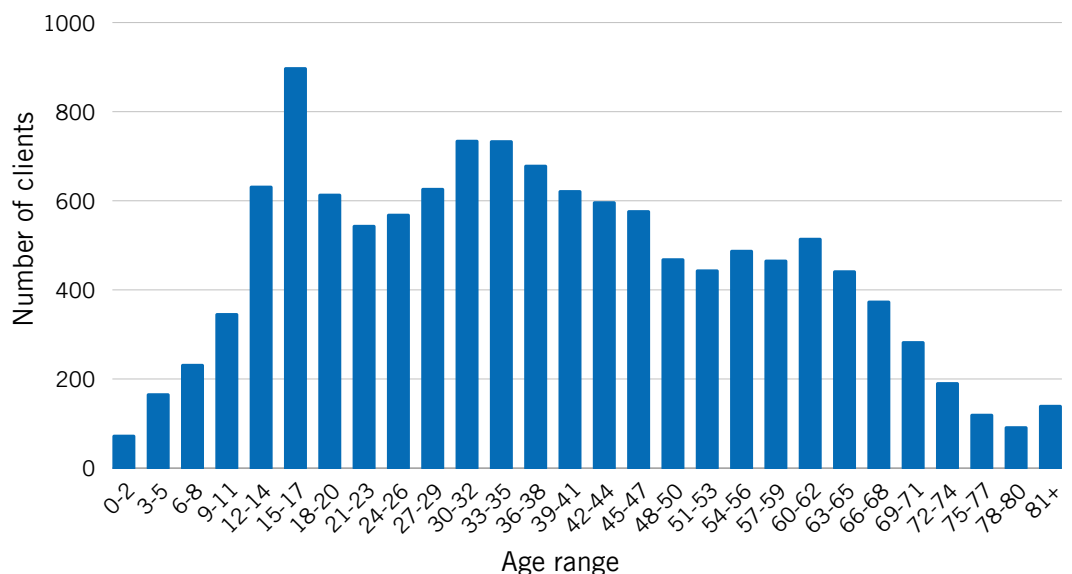


Primary Language

64.7% (8,236) English
22.5% (2,860) Spanish
0.9% (108) Portuguese
0.6% (74) Tagalog
0.3% (42) Cantonese
0.3% (33) Mandarin
0.2% (30) Russian
0.2% (22) Arabic
0.1% (21) Turkish*
0.1% (15) Vietnamese

*Turkish has been on the rise over the past three years

Age



Transforming Lives Through Compassionate Care: A Spotlight on HR360 Residential Programs

At HealthRIGHT 360 (HR360), we believe in the transformative power of community. Our mission is rooted in respect, compassion and safety for every individual we serve. Through client-centered care, we empower people facing substance use and mental health challenges to reclaim their lives in a supportive and respectful environment. Our goal is to eliminate or reduce the harm caused by mental health and substance use disorders, restore functioning in everyday life, and foster self-sufficiency. By engaging families and communities, HR360 helps clients reintegrate into society with dignity and purpose.

Innovative Healing at Women's Recovery Association (WRA) & Laurel House for Men

Women's Recovery Association and Laurel House for men—two vital programs under HR360—embody creativity and innovation in their approach to recovery. We meet clients where they are, build trusting relationships, and support them in setting and achieving meaningful goals. Our multi-disciplinary teams deliver comprehensive, integrated and culturally responsive services that treat the whole person, not just the symptoms.

These programs are designed to:

- Support recovery, health and overall wellbeing
- Enhance quality of life for clients and their families
- Reduce symptoms and restore functioning
- Promote community integration and reduce stigma



Comprehensive Residential Services That Empower

HR360 Residential Programs offer a wide range of individualized services, including:



- Substance use disorder treatment and mental health support
- Life skills development and educational groups on alcohol and substance use
- Specialized services for clients including weekly one to one counseling and individual therapy sessions with a Licensed Practitioner of the Healing Arts (LPHA) onsite
- Referrals and linkages to housing, employment and other vital resources

Together, we're building healthier communities. Get better. Do better. Be better, one person at a time.

By Christina Tufono, Program Director at HealthRIGHT 360.
Visit www.healthright360.org for more information.



Dr. Africa Awarded Health Equity Champion Silver Star at CBHA Awards

As part of the 40th Anniversary Celebration of the California Behavioral Health Association (CBHA) on November 6, leaders were recognized for their contributions in lifting up behavioral health at the local and state level. Among the top awardees was our very own Dr. Jei Africa, who received the Silver Star award in the Health Equity Champion Category along with Al Rowlett (CEO of Turning Point) and Albert M. Senella (CEO of Tarzana Treatment Center). Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, Former Surgeon General of the State of California was honored with the Gold Star. Congrats, Jei!



Provider Opportunity to Implement Evidence-Based Practices

BHRS is proud to join the BH-CONNECT (Behavioral Health Community-Based Organized Networks of Equitable Care and Treatment) program as part of our ongoing BHRS transformation journey. This partnership supports local providers and advances behavioral health priorities, ensuring our services reflect the needs of our community. Over the next few months, BHRS will work with providers and the Department of Health Care Services Centers of Excellence (COE) to strengthen evidence-based practices (EBPs). By adopting EBPs, BHRS increases the likelihood that every client receives high-quality, tailored services—improved well-being and quality of life, and supporting recovery.

Providers participating in BH-CONNECT will receive tailored training, technical assistance, and fidelity monitoring aligned with Medi-Cal and BHSA standards. County-specific consultations, multidisciplinary service team planning, and implementation support will help address local behavioral health needs. Providers will also have access to COE resources, webinars, and peer learning opportunities to foster ongoing quality improvement. San Mateo BHRS is further supporting eligible providers with monetary incentives via the CalAIM Contractor Quality Improvement Incentive Program.

BH-CONNECT is an important step in our Transformation Journey, join us in advancing equitable, community-based behavioral health care. Explore [BH-CONNECT](#) resources and opportunities for partnership today.

Phoenix Garden Installs French Drain in Time for Rains

Volunteers at the Phoenix Garden Center have installed a French drain in the Lavender Labyrinth! This significant project was led by youth volunteers throughout the fall and has been on the project wish list for two years. The drain, which prevents surface water from damaging the foundation of the Labyrinth, was extended by 40 ft. During the recent November rains, the team got to see how well the system redirected water away from the Lavender Labyrinth.

