



# DIRECTOR'S NEWSLETTER



Dr. Jei Africa

BHRS is kicking off an exciting new chapter with what we're calling our transformation journey, a strategic vision aimed at reshaping the way we provide care across our behavioral health system. While we've provided updates about this journey, related to Prop. 1, in recent Newsletters, this edition goes a little in depth. With the changing behavioral health landscape driven by new state laws and local needs, we want to continue our commitment to equity work and serving the most vulnerable individuals living with substance use and mental health

challenges. As we take on these changes, your participation is important. Whether it's by attending planning meetings or learning through updates in this Newsletter, there's a place for everyone in this transformation journey.

## BHRS Transformation

### Changing Landscape: Why Now?

Over the past several years, BHRS has been responding to a series of legislative and policy initiatives that are reshaping how we serve our community. These initiatives reinforce and bring to the forefront our responsibility as a Behavioral Health Plan for providing or arranging Specialty Mental Health Services (SMHS) and Drug Medi-Cal services to Medi-Cal beneficiaries within their county. BHRS holds an agreement with the State of California to serve the highest need individuals living with serious mental illness (SMI) and substance use disorders (SUD). The initiatives include:

- **California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM):** A multi-year initiative to drive delivery system transformation, improve quality outcomes, and support whole-person integrated care for Medi-Cal members.
- **Proposition 36, Senate Bill No. 43 (SB 43):** Expanding definitions and criteria for behavioral health treatment, including updates to involuntary treatment laws to better serve those with severe mental health and substance use disorders.
- **BH-CONNECT:** A newly approved Medicaid demonstration expanding access and quality of services with a focus on workforce development and community-based care.
- **Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI):** A historic investment in the mental health and well-being of children and youth, emphasizing school-based services and early intervention.

## BHRS Transformation Cont.

- **Mobile Crisis Services, Behavioral Health Bridge Housing (BHBH), and Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP):** Expanding crisis response, housing supports, and infrastructure to meet the needs of our most vulnerable communities.
- **Proposition 1:** Brought together a vision for behavioral health transformation across the state. This landmark initiative reforms funding from the millionaire's tax, prioritizes services and housing for individuals with the most significant needs, including those experiencing homelessness and substance use disorders.

### Our Commitment: A Collaborative Strategic Vision

Recognizing the magnitude of these changes, BHRS is embarking on a strategic visioning journey, which includes identifying our local San Mateo County priorities, reinstating our values and commitments to providing quality integrated services, client-centered care, and fostering a skilled and engaged workforce. We have an exciting opportunity to:

- Strengthen and improve quality services for the highest need individuals
- Align our funding, priorities and expertise across our County Health system of care
- Engage staff and community in the process
- Make data-informed decisions
- Improve communication and transparency



This journey began with an **Organizational Capacity Assessment** this past fall to evaluate our current strengths and areas for growth as a department to meet new demands. Following this assessment, BHRS presented a visioning process to staff and kicked off a Community Program Planning process to facilitate community input and voice in the visioning. See [May's Newsletter](#) for more information on the Community Program Planning Framework.

## BHRS Transformation Cont.

### What's Next?

The process will leverage requirements under Proposition 1 to bring this vision together including the Community Program Planning process and the development of a Three-Year Integrated Plan. Over the coming months, we will be inviting staff, partners, and community members to participate in a series of activities including gathering program data, engaging managers and staff in required system of care changes, presentations, input sessions, and surveys. Insights gathered will directly inform our broader strategic vision, set clear priorities, and align our services with state mandates and a comprehensive behavioral health continuum of care.

### Get Involved!

As part of the Proposition 1 Community Program Planning process, a Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) Transition Taskforce has been convened and held its first meeting on April 3rd. This meeting was the first of four, aimed at informing priorities for the BHRS transformation and specifically new requirements under Proposition 1. If you want to get involved, please attend the next meeting on June 5, 2025, from 3:00 PM to 4:30 PM at the Redwood Shores Library, Meeting Rooms A/B, or join via Zoom using the link [here](#). You can also visit the current MHSA website at [www.smchealth.org/MHSA](http://www.smchealth.org/MHSA) for the latest information and announcements.

### Communications Moving Forward

A communication plan is being developed to provide regular information and updates about the Behavioral Health Transformation, Proposition 1 and impacts to the BHRS system to everyone. We hope to have more information available online and via email soon.

This is a time of unprecedented opportunity and responsibility. By working collaboratively, we can build a behavioral health system that is responsive, equitable, and effective for every member of our community. We look forward to embarking on this together.

## Upcoming Events

**The San Mateo County Pride Parade and Celebration** is Saturday June 14. The Parade will take place from 10:30 - 11:30am, starting at 2<sup>nd</sup> & B Street and ending at San Mateo Central Park, where the Celebration will be from 11am - 5pm. Visit [smcpridecelebration.com](http://smcpridecelebration.com).

**The Juneteenth Wellness Celebration** is Saturday June 21 from 12-5pm at Eastside College Preparatory Academy in East Palo Alto. The event will include a resource fair, performances, musical selections, speakers, health and wellness checks and more!

**The San Mateo County Overdose Prevention Coalition** has kicked off with their first meeting! [Sign up for the Newsletter](#) to receive updates on what the Coalition is doing to reduce the number of overdose deaths, as well as resources for how you can be involved.