



# DIRECTOR'S NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the November Newsletter! In this issue we are proud to introduce two programs offered by local providers that support teens and their families in early psychosis intervention and crisis support. We also introduce a new initiative that aims to equip community members with free naloxone, a life-saving medication used to reverse an opioid overdose. In addition, as we honor Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20, we reaffirm our dedication to addressing inequities and continuing our efforts to improve the well-being of LGBTQ+ residents.

## Supporting Teens and Families After a Crisis

Since launching in Spring 2017, the RISE Dialectical Behavior Therapy Intensive Outpatient Program (DBT IOP) at [Children's Health Council](#) in Palo Alto has supported hundreds of teens and families across the Bay Area following suicidal crises. Our program helps teens, including those covered by Medi-Cal, and their parents build coping skills, reduce self-harming and suicidal behaviors, and work toward long-term emotional well-being.

RISE DBT IOP uses a Comprehensive DBT model—the only evidence-based treatment specifically designed for suicidal and self-harming adolescents—providing individual therapy, 24/7 phone coaching with their therapist, and skills groups (Multi-Family Skills Groups, Teen DBT Skills Groups and DBT Parent Coaching Group) to help participants apply DBT strategies in their daily lives. DBT focuses on the core skill areas of mindfulness, distress tolerance and crisis skills, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness skills to navigate relationships and support self-advocacy. We also work closely with parents and caregivers to support their healing after a crisis. Through safety planning and communication strategies, families learn to navigate challenges and strengthen their relationships.

We offer a hybrid program model: two in-person group days for teens and two online Multi-Family DBT Skills Groups via Zoom, allowing parents and caregivers from across the region to participate more easily. RISE DBT IOP was created to meet the needs of teens who require more support than traditional outpatient care can offer. Our mission is to help young people build a life worth living—and we're excited to expand our impact through a new partnership with BHRS, providing high-quality, life-saving care to teens and families in San Mateo County. To learn more about RISE DBT IOP visit our website, [www.chconline.org/rise/](http://www.chconline.org/rise/), or call us directly at 650-688-3675.

**By Jennifer Leydecker, LMFT, RISE DBT IOP Clinical Program Manager.**



A COLLABORATION OF EXPERTS FROM



## Felton Institute Provides Early Psychosis and Crisis Support

Felton Institute builds bridges of support to the San Mateo community. With a focus on behavioral health, our programs reach individuals and families who are in crisis and/or experiencing mental health challenges, regardless of insurance status. From our early psychosis programs to the 988-suicide prevention and crisis lifeline, we uplift all we serve.

Felton's (re)MIND® BEAM, and (re)MIND® Alumni San Mateo programs form the early psychosis coordinated specialty care continuum in San Mateo County, providing life-changing support to individuals and families affected by schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. Since 2012, (re)MIND® (formerly known as PREP—Prevention and Recovery in Early Psychosis), BEAM and (re)MIND® Alumni have served all regions of the county. The programs provide early detection and specialized treatment to nearly 700 residents ages 12 to 35 at high risk for developing psychosis or within two years of its first signs, extending care to thousands of families through psychoeducation and individualized support, reducing stigma and building compassionate communities. Felton's early psychosis programs provide outreach, education, accurate diagnosis, comprehensive treatment, and innovative aftercare—empowering individuals and families to move beyond crisis, connect with resources, achieve education and career goals, and sustain long-term stability with less reliance on public behavioral health systems.



Felton has recently taken over operation of the 988 suicide and crisis lifeline, further strengthening this network of care by ensuring that anyone in crisis has immediate support. In addition, we provide educational trainings, statewide advocacy and post-crisis stabilization services. Our trained counselors provide 24/7 support via 988, offering a lifeline not only in moments of acute distress but also as an entry point to longer-term resources. Both Felton's 988 suicide and crisis lifeline and (re)MIND® extend their impact into schools, meeting young people where they are and fostering community resilience through education and early intervention. By connecting crisis response with ongoing behavioral health services, Felton builds a continuum of support that reflects the strength and resilience of the San Mateo community.



**By Nicole Verduzco**, Executive Manager of Communications and  
**Adriana Furuzawa, LMFT, CPRP**, Director, Early Psychosis Division.

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# Honoring Trans Lives and Advancing Equity: Why Transgender Day of Remembrance and SOGI Data Collection Matter

The San Mateo County 2022 Health & Quality of Life Survey found that 8.1% of adult residents identify as LGBTQ+. Among this population, the data reveal deep disparities: LGBTQ+ residents report higher rates of substance use, poor mental health and suicidality. Nearly 40% of LGBTQ+ residents have a history of mental health challenges (more than double the county average), and one in four considered suicide in the past year. National data confirm what we see locally: stigma, discrimination and barriers to affirming care, particularly for transgender and gender-diverse people, drive these outcomes. These inequities persist across ages groups; local school surveys confirm LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to be bullied, experience depression, use substances and contemplate suicide compared with peers. Additionally, LGBTQ+ older adults face higher rates of poverty, chronic disease and isolation.

A critical tool in resolving inequities is Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) data collection. Access to SOGI data can make disparities more visible, help providers connect people to affirming care and resources and allocate services more equitably.

BHRS continues to be a part of many efforts to support the LGBTQ+ community by:

- Strengthening LGBTQ+ data sharing, highlighting inequities and improving SOGI data collection.
- Launching Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Intersex (TGI) Cultural Competency Training.
- Collaborating with the [San Mateo County Pride Center](#) to expand the TGI training with local data and resources.
- Supporting the dissemination of pronoun badge toppers across the health system since 2024 to increase visibility and belonging.
- Supporting the San Mateo County Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDoR) event since 2015. Each November, TDoR honors lives lost to anti-trans violence and calls us to action: to affirm dignity, confront inequities, and build safer communities.

We invite staff, clients, and community members to join us for San Mateo County's Transgender Day of Remembrance on **November 20th, 5:30–7:30 PM at the South San Francisco Parks and Recreation Center** (33 Arroyo Drive, SSF). Together, we can remember lives lost, stand with our transgender community, and continue building a county where all can thrive.

**By Maria Lorente-Foresti, Ph.D.,**  
Director of the BHRS Office of  
Diversity & Equity.



## Naloxone Stand Boxes Available for Distribution – Applications Open!

BHRS is now accepting applications for free naloxone stand boxes (NSBs) to broaden naloxone access in San Mateo County. This initiative, informed by focus group feedback hosted by the San Mateo County Overdose Prevention Coalition, aims to equip community members with free naloxone to prevent overdose-related deaths. Selected organizations will receive a NSB, roughly the size of a newspaper stand, and instructions on how to access California's no-cost naloxone program to stock and replenish the NSB with the nasal spray formulation of naloxone.

### What is Naloxone, and How Does It Work?

Naloxone is a medication that can reverse the effects of an opioid-related overdose, such as slowed or stopped breathing. It is effective against opioids like heroin, fentanyl and certain prescription pain medications. When administered promptly, naloxone may restore normal breathing and be a lifesaving intervention. The nasal spray formulation is easy to use and does not require medical training.

### Why Is Naloxone Important?

Opioid poisoning or overdose is a leading cause of preventable death, and by increasing public access to naloxone, we can reduce these numbers. Having naloxone readily available in public places means that more people have the chance to respond quickly, even if they don't have a direct connection to addiction services.

### About Naloxone Stand Boxes (NSBs)

The NSBs are durable, self-service units that hold between 60-74 boxes of intranasal naloxone. They are intended for installation in publicly accessible areas so that community members can access naloxone at any time. Each NSB will display simple instructions for recognizing signs of overdose and administering naloxone as well as QR codes linking to training videos, harm reduction and addiction treatment resources.

BHRS will purchase and will ship NSBs at no cost to any organization within San Mateo County that meets eligibility requirements. Please note that all participating organizations are responsible for obtaining and restocking the naloxone in the NSB, which can be done at no cost via California's Department of Health Care Services Naloxone Distribution Project. All participating organizations will be required to submit monthly reports to the Overdose Prevention Coalition on the number of units restocked and number of opioid overdose reversals with naloxone.



**By Ronni Brown DDS, MPH, FADI**, BHRS Senior Community Health Planner. For more details, including FAQ's and the application, visit the San Mateo County Overdose Prevention Coalition website. For questions about the NSBs, email [HS\\_BHRS\\_OverdosePrevention@smcgov.org](mailto:HS_BHRS_OverdosePrevention@smcgov.org).

## BHSA Transformation Journey Update

In the [June 2025 Director's Newsletter](#) we shared about an exciting new chapter for BHRS that we're calling the "BHRS Transformation Journey". The journey is helping us identify our local San Mateo County behavioral health priorities over the next five years.

Over the past several months we have engaged staff and community through presentations, focus groups, surveys, input sessions and key interviews to help inform and drive our BHRS Transformation vision. As a result, we heard from **~90 staff members** directly and gained insights from **175 respondents**. The feedback has been invaluable in shaping our next steps in how we communicate and involve you in the journey. We thank everyone who participated and for your openness during these conversations. We remain committed to sustaining open dialogue and working together as stewards of the BHRS Transformation Journey and anticipate a full launch of our updated vision, mission, priorities and anticipated outcomes as part of a 5-Year roadmap this December 2025.

Additionally, a comprehensive Community Program Planning (CPP) between March and October 2025 engaged over **300 clients and families, community members, staff, community agencies and partners** to inform BHRS' plan to address seven statewide priority goals. These priority goals represent the foundation of ongoing behavioral health transformation efforts across the state and help us advance our BHRS Transformation Journey commitment to "ensure every service reflects the voices, needs, and aspirations of those we serve." The seven priority goals include improving access to care and social connection and reducing client experiences with homelessness, justice-involvement, institutionalization, untreated behavioral health conditions, and removal of children from their homes.

A transition taskforce was brought together to provide a space for individuals to learn specifically about Proposition 1's impact and the priority goals. Additionally, 5 deep dive information sessions, 14 input sessions, and 6 targeted discussions were conducted with youth, older adult providers and clients, immigrant families and veterans, homeless and farmworker care partners.

### Help us prioritize all the wonderful ideas we received!

To see a full list of ideas and help us prioritize the various strategies we received from the community input sessions and discussions, please take 15 minutes to complete this survey by scanning the QR code or at the [link here](#).



The goal of the survey is to gather community perspectives to help us prioritize strategies related to seven statewide behavioral health goals and help us advance priorities for our BHRS Transformation Journey!

**By Doris Estremera**, Mental Health Services Act Manager.