

Behavioral Wellness Commission of Santa Barbara County
2017 Annual Report
Prepared By: Sharon Byrne, Chair

Formation:

The Behavioral Wellness Commission was formed out of the merger of the former Mental Health Commission and Alcohol Drug Problems Advisory Board. The chair of the Mental Health Commission at that time, Michael Gorodezky approached me, then chair of the Alcohol Drug Problems Advisory Board, to explore a merger of the two boards. The two boards had held 3 joint meetings during 2016 to explore better procedures and share knowledge. A subcommittee was formed to explore a merged board. The subcommittee was tasked with looking at other merged boards in California counties, and determining the steps we'd need to take.

At the first reporting back of this subcommittee, they expressed great enthusiasm for the merger and had even drafted bylaws! From there, the Santa Barbara County Supervisors agreed to let the boards sunset in December 2016, and form a newly merged board in January 2017.

The first meeting was held in January, and a new set of bylaws, prepared by the county, were adopted. I was elected Chair, after being volunteered by Ruth Ackerman, and Peter Claydon was elected as Vice Chair.

Training and Adopting Objectives For The New Commission

Dr. Gleghorn arranged for the newly formed board to receive training with Susan Morris Wilson, a consultant for California Institute for Behavioral Health Solutions. She trains county mental health boards as part of the California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards and Commissions. We assembled on a Saturday morning in February, and trained for 6 hours on our responsibilities, the Brown Act, and more.

In that session, we decided to adopt 5 objectives for the coming year. Some are of course required, such as the data notebook by the State, and the creation of this annual report to you, the Board of Supervisors. The remaining objectives were crafted by the newly formed commission, with coaching from Susan, during the training.

These are presented in very simple form below, with the caveat that it's better, when starting with a newly formed team, to attempt to do something fairly small in scope, but attempt to execute it as well as possible while the team develops its capacities, working relationships and learns the terrain.

**Behavioral Wellness Commission
2017 Goals**

	Timeline for completion	Responsible	Notes
Objective 1: Submit Annual Report To Board of Supervisors	02/28/18	Chair	
Objective 2: Complete the Data Notebook for submission to the CA Mental Health Planning Council	04/30/17	Committee	Completed Mid-April
Objective 3: Oversee and advise the Behavioral Wellness Department on department programs and community based programs providing services	Ongoing	All	
Objective 4: Cross pollinate expertise between ADP / MH former board commissioners	Ongoing	Committee	
Objective 5: Represent Community Concerns and Input on program needs	Ongoing	All	

Projects in green are those currently in progress. Blue represents completed projects. No projects are behind schedule (red) or not yet started (white).

Results Achieved:

1. The 2016 **Data Notebook on Youth Services** was a smashing success. The team consisted of **Ruth Ackerman, Peter Claydon, Edwin Weaver, Ann Eldridge, John Truman and John Doyle** of ADP. The notebook was submitted ahead of time, and received compliments from Susan Morris Wilson and Linda Dickerson of the California Mental Health Planning Council on its excellent quality, highly informative content, and comprehensive nature.
2. Another subcommittee formed to create a process for providing **Site Evaluations**, where we visit and evaluate either in-house service facilities or contractors with whom we've outsourced services. A **talented team consisting of Tom Franklin, Rod Pearson and Ruth Ackerman** created the protocols, established an exhaustive list of potential sites, and developed a standardized questionnaire for each site visit. The former Alcohol Drug Problems Advisory Board had a fairly simple site evaluation process in place, and it provided the launch point for creating a more robust system-wide approach that would include evaluating mental health services for the first time. The ability to conduct standardized site visits delivered significant progress in three of the 2017 adopted objectives in one vehicle. The protocol requires that one commissioner with alcohol and drug experience and one commissioner with mental health experience pair up to conduct a site visit. The subcommittee makes this process very easy – they set the visit up with Behavioral Wellness staff and arm the visiting commissioners with a standard questionnaire. This process **ensures that expertise will be cross-pollinated between visiting pairs of commissioners, Objective 4.** It also **provides oversight of Behavioral Wellness services and programs, Objective 3.** If commissioners discover

gaps between community need and services provided through site visits, they can address these gaps. It also gives a foundation to **Objective 5, in that commissioners who conduct site visits are in a much better position to then receive community input on how well various programs are working, and advise the Department accordingly.** Finally, it ensures a standard for data collection in that every visit requires a questionnaire and subsequent presentation to the Behavioral Wellness Commission. **With standardized data, we can begin to evaluate programs objectively.** This effort was piloted through 2017 by the subcommittee, and will be refined as needed. The intention is for multiple site visits to be conducted in 2018, with an array of standardized data collected so that we can adequately evaluate our programs and how well they serve County residents.

3. Concerns were expressed in the beginning of the year that the Behavioral Wellness Commission was not included in the planning of the **Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) 3-year program.** The Department was very responsive to this concern, though the Behavioral Wellness Commission does not have formal veto or approval authority over MHSA programs. The Department scheduled multiple community input forums across the county, and commissioners attended each one. The commission held a lengthy MHSA review session during our April meeting. Finally, the commission hosted an MHSA forum for the public in May in the Board of Supervisors conference room. These actions provided the most input going into the MHSA plan ever, and accomplished part of **Objective 5, to represent community concerns and input on program needs.**
4. As chair, I attended the **California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards and Commissions annual meeting in June in Irvine.** During that weekend, I met commissioners from across the State, and we compared notes on how we run our meetings, what works, and where we struggled. I was surprised to learn after sharing our experiences and practices that other counties felt we were quite far ahead of the curve. Half of the California counties have merged boards. Not all are functioning optimally. Few are doing site visits or systematic reviews of their programs. Few have strong and supportive supervisorial representation regularly attending their board meetings, as we do in Supervisor Williams. Few have conducted public forums. No one had done a full day retreat for training to get everyone on the same page.
5. News of our progress produced a visit from the **California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards and Commissions** to Santa Barbara. Theresa Comstock, the current president, attended our November commission meeting. She articulated to the commission that it was one of the best local behavioral health board meetings she'd ever attended, and that we were a model of a productive fully integrated board.
6. We've reviewed some of the **most important behavioral health issues** facing this County, with powerfully informative speakers like Chris Flynn, M.D. from Cottage ER on opioid abuse, youth substance use from Edwin Weaver derived from the California Healthy Kids Survey, how clients perceive Behavioral Wellness with the Consumer Perception Survey report, Laura's Law, reports on homelessness and corresponding mental health and substance needs, and discussions with Eddie Hsueh from the Sheriffs Office on jail inmate needs.
7. Dr. Gleghorn and Supervisor Williams have attended nearly every meeting. Dr Gleghorn provides informative formal Executive Director reports for each meeting, and Supervisor Williams has proved to be an excellent liaison to the Board of Supervisors for this commission.

Board Dynamics

We have struggled somewhat with turnover on the board. We lost Peter Claydon, serving as our Vice Chair, due to a conflict of interest. Our current Vice Chair, Alicia Journey, was evacuated during the fire, and lost her home during the mudslide. We lost Edwin Weaver, the substance abuse prevention expert on the team, in October, due to a newly created conflict of interest, as he was awarded a contract from the County. We lost Ruth Ackerman in December. Weaver and Ackerman were particularly hard losses as both possessed great expertise and were willing to work hard as commissioners. We are still very light on membership for District 4. Some commissioners have been absent for 3 or more meetings.

As a newly formed commission in 2017, with new appointees eager to accomplish good things for those suffering with mental health and substance issues, I've been very impressed with the passion, energy and skills of the subcommittees we formed to tackle various projects. Commissioner Mary Richardson stepped up to serve on the Sheriff's Community Corrections Committee to address health, mental health and other issues in the jail. Commissioners Franklin, Pearson, Winter and Rhode attend those meetings as well. This has been a board ready to tackle the lion's share of the work, while not overburdening staff.

Agenda items are decided by direct democracy. At the end of each meeting, 15 minutes is dedicated to offering future agenda items. Staff, the chair and vice chair schedule the agenda based on speaker availability.

A newly formed board has its challenges too, in expectations carried over from previous incarnations of this board re an executive committee, bylaws and a wish to return to lengthier meetings. While valuable time was consumed in board meetings hashing these things out, ultimately Supervisor Williams deftly moved the team ahead in September.

Finally, one must take into account the massive impacts from the Thomas Fire and mudslide that have left the south county reeling. The Department administered services in the field tirelessly since early December, while contending with emergency evacuations from the loss of Vista Del Mar and continually impending evacuations through December. Our meeting was cancelled in January due to the mudslide: staff was providing critical services in the field, while several commissioners and our supervisor liaison, residing in the south County, were powerfully impacted by the mudslide.

A Look Ahead in 2018

Our next data notebook, due to the State shortly, is focused on the needs of seniors in our County. We will be happy to share a copy of this with you.

Similarly to 2017, we'd like to meet with our supervisors and ascertain your priorities and concerns to inform our work on this commission.

Funding for the Department is always a concern, and no doubt will be again in 2018. We are starting to explore alternate sources of funding via a newly formed ballot initiative subcommittee. We will again seek support for Laura's Law, though it's our understanding budget has been provided such that it won't come up for consideration again this year.

We continue to have vacancies in Districts 2, 3 and 4, and would very much appreciate appointees for those. Finally, It is my hope that we move forward as a unified team and achieve the highest possible collective good for the residents of this county and the taxpayers.

Behavioral Wellness Commission of Santa Barbara County of 2017

Supervisor: Das Williams

Program Administrator: Karen Campos

1st District:

Wayne Mellinger

Jeffrey Moore – Data Notebook - Senior Services, Committee chair

Rod Pearson – Site Visit Committee, Ballot Initiative Committee

Jan Winter

2nd District:

Ruth Ackerman – Site Visit Committee, Data Notebook – Youth Services. *Resigned December*

Judy Blue – Data Notebook - Senior Services

Alicia Journey – Commission Vice Chair

Sharon Rumberger – Data Notebook - Senior Services, Ballot Initiative Committee

3rd District:

Peter Claydon – Data Notebook – Youth Services. *Resigned March*

Tom Franklin – Site Visit Committee, Ballot Initiative Committee

Mary Richardson - Sheriff's Community Corrections Committee Appointee

Ciara Wong – *not returning*

4th District:

Sharon Byrne – Commission Chair, Ballot Initiative Committee

Edwin Weaver – Data Notebook – Youth Services. *Resigned October*

5th District:

Ann Eldridge - Data Notebook – Youth Services

Charles Huffines

John Truman - Data Notebook – Youth Services

Jim Rohde – *appointed November* - Sheriff's Community Corrections Committee - Alternate