



A Tradition of Stewardship  
A Commitment to Service

# Napa County Mental Health Board

## 2022-23 Annual Report

September 2023



**Rob Palmer**  
2022 - 2023 Chair

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*Through public meetings, site visits, work groups, speakers, and reports from MH Division Staff and contractors, the MHB works to understand local mental health issues and advise the Board of Supervisors and the Mental Health Director regarding Napa County's mental health services and challenges. Napa County Mental Health Board members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors. It is part of our mandated duties to provide the Board of Supervisors with an annual report reviewing the needs and performance of the county's mental health system.*

### Executive Summary

Napa County's Mental Health Board (MHB) has dedicated, engaged, and diverse members who understand that mental illness is a medical condition affecting a substantial number of our citizens, and supports the provision of effective mental health services, programs, and facilities in our county. Advocating for effective access to treatment and other supportive services, including housing and employment, for people experiencing mental health issues is our chief concern.

#### Key Concerns and Recommendations:

- 1) **Integration of Behavioral Health Services:** Serious mental illness (SMI) is often triggered or exacerbated by complex and multi-dimensional aspects of an individual's life and cannot be properly addressed in isolation. Co-occurring substance abuse is very common. To facilitate the wider lens needed for effective mental health oversight and services, the Mental Health Division is now overseen by the Deputy Director HHSA—Behavioral Health, who also oversees the County's Alcohol and Drug Services. This integrative change aligns with the goals of CalAIM to better coordinate and streamline delivery of services and ensure there is "no wrong door" to access effective treatment. Much of the information presented to and gathered by the MHB in the past year related to this on-going process, which we heartily endorse. Accomplishing these goals requires a professional staff sufficient to the need. The MHB urges Napa County to prioritize fiscal and administrative action necessary to achieve the important service delivery goals of HHSA's behavioral health integration and CalAIM's reforms.
- 2) **Increased Peer Provider Support:** From a variety of sources, the MHB gathered information about the role and efficacy of peer provider support in delivering mental health services, as well as some of the barriers that hamper peer support specialists in delivering integrative person-centered care. Peer support specialists offer a first-person experience perspective to individuals with mental health issues, from those with similar language, cultural affinity, age, and gender alignment perspectives. The MHB believes the role of peer support specialists is underdeveloped in our community and should be nurtured through development of realistic compensation and career path structures that will attract and retain motivated service providers.
- 3) **Children & Youth Behavioral Health:** Serving the behavioral health needs of our children and youth is a priority for Napa's BH professionals and educators. They confront a range of problems that has grown dramatically in size and nature in recent years due to pandemic isolation, harmful social media interactions, and access to drugs and alcohol. Napa has seen an increase in crisis interventions by BH crisis teams, emergency psychiatric admissions, and youth suicide ideation. Prevention and treatment resources sufficient to address the need must be a priority in community behavioral health wellness planning and funding.
- 4) **Housing:** We again emphasize the need for more non-congregate shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing options for individuals and families experiencing serious mental health issues. The County's recent investments in Project Homekey projects, together with Heritage House/Valle Verde, will significantly increase the stock of supportive housing in the County once completed. But a shortfall in supportive housing for persons with serious mental illness is projected to persist. Insufficient supportive shelter and permanent housing, as well as long-term adult residential facilities, results in out-of-county placements and a revolving door between homelessness, jails, hospitals, and short-term care facilities. This results in high monetary cost for Napa County and high social costs for the citizens and their families.

## Accomplishments of Napa County Mental Health Division

It is also essential to acknowledge the hard work and accomplishments of the Napa County Behavioral Health Division, under the leadership of Behavioral Health Director Cassandra Eslami, reflected in the Napa County Health & Human Services Agency Strategic Plan Report, FY 2022-2023.

- HHS completed an 18-month long process to integrate Alcohol & Drug and Mental Health Services into an integrated *Behavioral Health* division. Complex clinical systems require that resources are lined up to support coordinated and integrated service delivery to clients and HHS has implemented this change placing clients at the forefront throughout.
- Coordinated several multidisciplinary approaches to meeting community needs as an integrated agency including an integrated Cross Systems Training collaboration between CWS, Behavioral Health, and Probation with the goal of continuing to center our shared work with children, youth, families around the integrated Core Practice Model.
- Partnered with Corrections and Probation Departments to better coordinate medical and behavioral health outcomes for justice involved individuals prior to and upon release from county jails and juvenile hall ensuring access to SSSD Medi-Cal.
- Created additional point of entry for Behavioral Health Services in Calistoga.
- As part of the broader CalAIM implementation, HHS began Enhanced Care Management, a Medi-Cal benefit focused on complex care management to specific populations of focus.
- 1497 survey respondents and focus group participants provided feedback about community behavioral health needs and services through the Community Health Assessment, Older Adults Needs Assessment, County Self-Assessment, MHS Community Planning Process, and other collaborative feedback and assessment processes.
- Over the course of 18 months, stakeholder input from the MHS Community Planning Process was used to leverage \$4.2 million in MHS funding commitments to community organizations and programming to support behavioral health services and capacity building.
- Expanded and co-located staff across the County from 20 to 35 since 2019. Mental Health Workers were co-located at the Napa County Library in April 2022, and have since served 168 individuals this reporting period.
- Held regular trauma informed Latine Practice Group trainings, with emphasis on the experience of immigration trauma for families.
- Collaborated with community partners on the Napa Opioid Safety coalition to present a virtual Fentanyl Town Hall and other activities.
- Participated in a host of local and state forums, associations, and committees to share information and coordinate resources.
- Seventy (70) staff members participated in secondary-trauma-support groups to ensure staff had the tools to maintain resiliency and engage successfully and sustainably with clients.
- Sponsored two participants in the Bay Area Social Services Consortium (BASSC) Executive Development Program and three in the BASSC Supervisory Learning Collaborative.
- Published public-facing data dashboard, the product of years long development of a data warehouse project to connect program data and provide insights into service delivery within an integrated agency.
- In collaboration with HHS Fiscal, Operations, Quality Management, and Behavioral Health Divisions, and with contracted behavioral health and crisis services community partners, HHS implemented a new Electronic Health Record to improve coordination of services alignment with data sharing and other CalAIM requirements.

## Status of the Mental Health Board

**Meetings:** Regular MHB meetings were held on the 2nd Monday of each month via Zoom from July 2022 – February 2023, and in person starting in March 2023 when the Governor lifted the Covid 19 emergency guidelines. A notice of all regular and special MHB meetings was made public, and an agenda was followed which allowed for public comment. MHB meeting agendas and minutes are available on the County website. A quorum was established at all MHB meetings with attendance ranging from 60% to 93%: average attendance was 75%. All Executive Committee meetings had a quorum with an average of 79% attendance.

In July, the MHB held a public hearing for review and comment on the Mental Health Division’s Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) FY 22-23 Annual Update to the MHSA Three Year Plan.

### Committees & Workgroups:

**Executive Committee:** Rob Palmer, Chair; Kristine Haataja, Vice Chair; Kristyn Miles, Past Chair. Members at Large: Patricia Sullivan, Orion Taraban, Heidi Van De Ryt

**Data Notebook Workgroup (2022):** Rob Palmer (Chair), Patricia Sullivan, Neil D’Silva

**Annual Report:** Rob Palmer (Chair), Kristine Haataja, Kristyn Miles

**Advisory Board on Alcohol and Drugs (ABAD):** Heidi Van De Ryt, Neil D’Silva

**Community Corrections Partnership:** Ed Ortiz

**Commission on Aging:** Beth Nelsen, Kristine Haataja

**Housing Commission:** Keri Akemi-Hernandez

**In-Home Supportive Services Advisory Committee:** Rowena Korobkin

**Quality Improvement/Utilization Review Committee (QI/UR):** Kristine Haataja

**Stakeholders Advisory Committee (SAC):** Patricia Sullivan

**County Suicide Prevention Council:** Kristyn Miles

**Cultural Competence Committee:** Keri Akemi Hernandez

**Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council:** Tiffany Iverson

**Live Healthy Napa County:** Rob Palmer (Chair) & Kristyn Miles

**Veterans Commission:** Kathleen Chance

**California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards/Commissions:** Kristine Haataja

**Membership:** At the close of the fiscal year, membership on the MHB consisted of 10 members, with 5 open positions. The BOS appointed three new members to the MHB in FY 2022-2023, Shauna Lewis, Daisy Zamora, and Cassidy Nolan. Those leaving the MHB at the end of their terms included Kathleen Chance, Zachariah Geyer, Tiffany Iverson, and Beth Nelsen. Two members, Ed Ortiz, and Neil D’Silva, resigned because they moved out of the County, and one member, Keri Akemi-Hernandez resigned for personal reasons. We thank them for their participation and contributions to the Board.

Board Member	District at Time of Appointment	Appointment Date	Term Ends	Represents
Supervisor Ryan Gregory	2	08/28/2018	12/31/2023	BOS
Kristine Haataja	4	11/03/2015	01/01/2025	Consumer
Rowena Korobkin, M.D.	1	01/06/2015	01/01/2024	Family Member
Shauna Lewis	1	04/04/2023	01/01/2024	Consumer
Kristyn Miles	5	08/28/2018	01/01/2024	Concerned Citizen
Cassidy Nolan	1	06/13/2023	01/01/2026	Veteran
Robert Palmer	3	01/14/2020	01/01/2025	Concerned Citizen
Patricia Sullivan	1	06/08/2021	01/01/2023	Consumer
Orion Taraban	1	04/05/2022	01/01/2025	Family Member
Heidi Van De Ryt	3	02/23/2021	01/01/2024	Family Member
Daisy Zamora	4	05/16/2023	01/01/2026	Consumer
Open				
Open				
Open				
Open				

## Goals & Accomplishments

The following objectives and goals for 2022-2023 were developed by the MHB Executive Committee and approved by the MHB. Below are details of the work done by the MHB on each of these goals.

### A. Objective: Fulfill the Mandated Responsibilities and Core Purposes of the Mental Health Board

#### 1. Goal: *Review and evaluate the community's mental health needs, services, facilities, and special problems [WIC 5604.2 (a)(1)]*

##### **Accomplishments:**

- Throughout the year, the MHB hosted a variety of speakers and panel forums related to Napa County mental health issues and services, including:
  - Napa County's new Mobile Response Unit;
  - Mental Health issues affecting veterans,
  - Pathways to Well Being program for children being served in Child Welfare or Foster Care;
  - Peer Provider Services;
  - Medication Assisted Treatment for individuals with substance abuse disorders;
  - Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) for Law Enforcement personnel in Napa County ;
  - Mental Health priorities in Napa County schools.
- The Mental Health Board established a Workgroup - "Mental Health Needs of Women & Children Survivors of Violence" to determine whether there are mental health service gaps in serving Napa County residents who are survivors of violence . The Workgroup conducted a broad survey of county services, community based organizations, and the criminal justice system to identify services available and perceived unmet needs.

##### **Key findings:**

- Family violence is one of the most common calls to Napa law enforcement and one of the most frequently prosecuted crime. However, fewer than half of all domestic violence cases involving adults are reported, and abuse/neglect of children is vastly under reported.
- Napa County has a robust array of providers that are active in identifying, intervening, and providing services to women and children who are survivors of violence. Organizations work together to provide a collaborative network of services. The challenge is to ensure that survivors are aware of and connect with services.
- Monarch Justice Center provides much needed integrated services, but reliable funding sources are needed.
- Services address mental health as well as basic needs, such as, housing, food, medical care, economic stability, and legal assistance.
- Services are primarily centered in the City of Napa and are not as accessible to residents in other cities or the County.

##### **Recommendations:**

- Secure a stable funding source for the Monarch Justice Center and expand services Up-Valley.
- Develop and implement a communications and public relations strategy to increase awareness of services for women and children who are survivors of domestic violence.
- Explore funding opportunities for Police Domestic Violence Officer (or other resource) to provide domestic violence training to officers in the Sheriff's Department and other County Police Departments

#### 2. Goal: *Review and comment on the county's performance outcome data and communicate its findings to the California Behavioral Health Planning Council (CMHPC) [WIC 5604.2 (a)(7)]*

##### **Accomplishments:**

- The Board completed the California Behavioral Health Planning Council's 2022 Data Notebook questionnaire in collaboration with Napa County's Mental Health Division, Housing and Homelessness Services, and input from community members. Key Board observations related to services for persons in Napa County experiencing mental illness follow.
- In 2022, the Planning Council's Data Notebook focus was regarding the impact of the Covid-19 public health emergency on behavioral health needs and services.
  - Given the existing data documenting dramatic increases in reports of behavioral disorders in children and youth in recent years, the Planning Council sought information about the pandemic's impact on children and youth. Napa confirmed increases in points of stress on our system for children and youth behavioral health services. These included: suicide ideation, emergency department admissions, crisis interventions and decreased access/utilization of mental health services. The social isolation of "distance learning" was a contributing factor, and the usefulness of telehealth was adversely impacted by "Zoom fatigue." Concern was expressed to the MHB that these negative impacts will outlast current pandemic remediation and funding.

### Goals & Accomplishments cont'd...

- From the input it received concerning the pandemic's adult behavioral health impact, the MHB reported increased demand for services for anxiety, an increase in emergency department admissions related to self-harm, suicide and misuse of drugs and alcohol, along with decreased access to/utilization of mental health services.
  - Napa County also reported negative pandemic-related Mental Health Division staffing impacts: resignations, absences due to sickness from the virus and childcare difficulties.
  - The Data Notebook included several questions that are addressed each year to provide monitoring trends to identify unmet needs or gaps due to changes in population, available resources, or local policies. There are recognized areas of unmet behavioral health needs:
    - Napa continues to lack sufficient community-based Adult Residential Facilities (ARFs) for persons experiencing serious mental illness (SMI). The alternatives are large ARFs outside Napa, remote from home and family support. Community-based ARF facilities in or adjacent to Napa's continuum of care would likely result in improved outcomes and could yield significant cost savings over time.
    - A variety of difficulties face individuals from underserved communities in need of mental health services. These include community stigma, distrust of mental health services, transportation difficulties, and lack of funds and equipment needed to access telehealth services.
  - The Planning Council's annual questions also address the state of homelessness programs and services because of the intersection of housing with behavioral health issues. While homelessness for individuals with SMI remains a serious issue, Napa was able to report progress in expanding its capacity of emergency, temporary and permanent supportive housing. This was possible in part through Project Homekey funding, HUD Permanent Supportive Housing Expansion grants and the start of the 88 unit Heritage House and Valle Verde development. A collaboration between the County and city of Napa also obtained access to 45 emergency housing vouchers, 25% of which were reserved for persons fleeing domestic violence, sexual assault, or human trafficking.
  - The Mental Health Board identifies the highest priority programs, facilities or resources desired in the next 3 years as:
    - Expansion of behavioral health services for children and youth;
    - Successful accomplishment of the administrative integration of the County's behavioral health functions and services;
    - Expansion of housing and treatment facilities for individuals with serious mental illness, including ARF and in-patient psychiatric facilities; and
    - Development of a more robust peer provider BH workforce.
3. **Goal:** *Review and approve the procedures used to ensure citizen and professional involvement at all stages of the planning process [WIC 5604.2 (a)(4)].*
- Accomplishments:**
- Pursuant to interim pandemic-related rules, the Board continued its regular meeting schedule by means of on-line meetings using "Zoom" technology until March, when in-person meetings resumed.
  - Meeting Agendas, with Zoom link information, were and are publicly posted on the Napa County website: <http://www.countyofnapa.org/HHSA/MentalHealthBoard/>
  - The public was invited to attend and participate in all monthly MHB meetings. Public comments, concerns and questions were received from members of the public during the year. Overall, the level of public participation in Zoom meetings was minimal. Since resuming in person meetings, few community members have attended meetings.
4. **Goal:** *Review any county agreement entered into pursuant to Section 5650 of the Welfare & Institutions Code.*
- Accomplishments:**
- The following specific contracts, agreements, reports, and applications were provided for review during FY 2022-2023:
    - MH Division's Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) FY 22-23 Annual Plan Update to the MHSA Three-Year Plan, Public Hearing, August 2022;
    - Grant applications for PATH Grant, SAMHSA Grant, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant, Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Grant, Covid Emergency Response Grant, and Crisis Care Mobile Unit Grant, September 2022;
    - MHSA Three Year Community Planning Process Plan in October 2022; DHCS External Quality Review Organization (EQRO) Audit, November 22;
    - Awards of PATH Grant, SAMHSA Grant, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant, Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Grant, Covid Emergency Response Grant, and Crisis Care Mobile Unit Grant, June 2023.

### Goals & Accomplishments cont'd...

#### B. Objective: *Maintain an active, involved Mental Health Board.*

##### 1. Goal: *Achieve full MHB membership that reflects the diversity of the populations served.*

###### **Accomplishments:**

- As of June 30, 2023, the MHB had 11 members, including mental health consumers (36%), family members (27%) and interested/concerned citizens (27%). The Board recruited three new members to fill vacancies during FY 22-23, and there are four open positions.
- The Mental Health Board continues to work toward adequately representing the demographic composition of the community.

##### 2. Goal: *Maintain a high attendance and participation at all MHB meetings, including all committees and/or workgroups.*

###### **Accomplishments:**

- Board Meetings were held monthly without exception and a quorum was established at each meeting. Board member attendance ranged from 60% to 93%, with average attendance at 75%.
- The Executive Committee also met monthly without exception, and a quorum was established at all meetings.

##### 3. Goal: *Maintain representation on appropriate local, regional, and state boards, committees, councils, etc., and regular reporting to the Mental Health Board.*

###### **Accomplishments:**

- In FY 22-23, Kristine Haataja served as a member of the Governing Board of the California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards/Commissions (CALBHB/C). CALBHB/C updates, newsletters, [website](#) access, and regional meeting schedules were provided and discussed with the MHB.
- Patricia Sullivan served as a member of the MHSA Stakeholder's Advisory Committee (SAC).
- Kristine Haataja was a member of the Mental Health Division Quality Improvement Utilization Review Committee (QI/UR).
- Kristyn Miles was a member of the Napa County Suicide Prevention Council.
- Rob Palmer, Neil D'Silva and Heidi Van De Ryt participated in meetings of the Alcohol and Drug Advisory Board (ABAD); Ms. Van de Ryt became a member of the ABAD board during the year.
- Beth Nelsen and Kristine attended meetings of the Commission on Aging.
- Ed Ortiz participated in meetings of the Community Corrections Partnership.
- Keri Akemi-Hernandez was a member of the Housing Commission and attended meetings of the Cultural Competence Committee.
- Tiffany Iverson participated in the meetings of the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Committee.
- Kathleen Chance participated in the meetings of the Veterans Commission.
- Kristyn Miles and Rob Palmer participated in Live Healthy Napa County meetings.

##### 4. Goal: *Complete 100% of site visits.*

###### **Accomplishments:**

- The Mental Health Board completed 5 scheduled site visits during FY 2022-2023. The visited locations included:
  - Progress Place (Crisis Residential), Napa;
  - Bella House (Transitional Residential), Napa;
  - Crestwood Care Center (Mental Health Rehabilitation Center), Angwin;
  - North Valley Behavioral Health (Hospital), Yuba City;
  - Willow Glen Care Center (Adult Residential), Yuba City.

##### 5. Goal: *Provide training opportunities to MHB Members*

###### **Accomplishments:**

- Board members were notified of dates for Mental Health Board and Advocacy training facilitated by the California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards/Commissions (CALBHB/C). Members participating in training included:
  - Kristine Haataja: How to Be an Effective MH/BH Board/Commission, Chair Training, Behavioral Health Continuum, Community Engagement Training
  - Patricia Sullivan: How to Be an Effective MH/BH Board/Commission, Behavioral Health Continuum
  - Daisy Zamora: How to Be an Effective MH/BH Board/Commission



## Meet the Board Members



**Rob Palmer** is chair of the Napa County Mental Health Board. He is a semi-retired lawyer. His practice focused on litigation matters and, in recent years, on representing at-risk clients in human rights and refugee asylum cases. He and his wife Mary live in Yountville, close to two of their three grown daughters and three grandchildren, who live in Napa. Before coming to California in 1995, Mr. Palmer practiced law in Washington, DC, and in Phoenix, AZ, where he also served on the board and is a past president of the Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest. He was appointed to the Mental Health Board in 2019.

**Kristine Haataja** is Vice Chair of the Napa County Mental health Board. She was a Consumer Insights & Strategy Consultant for corporations and consulting firms for over 35 years, retiring in 2015. Ms. Haataja is especially passionate about mental health intervention in early childhood and adolescence, based upon her lived experience raising a child with serious mental health issues. Ms. Haataja was appointed to the Mental Health Board in 2015, is on the Executive Committee, served as Vice Chair for 2016-2017, and Chair for 2017-2019. She has served on several workgroups, including School-based Mental Health, Member Recruitment, Community Outreach, and the 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 Data Notebooks. She is a 2017 graduate of Leadership Napa Valley (LNV), and served a term on the LNV Board. In 2019, Ms. Haataja was elected to the California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards and Commissions (CALBHB/C) and now serves as Secretary/Treasurer. She has a BA in Sociology from Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota and an MBA from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Ms. Haataja lives in Napa with her husband.



**Ryan Gregory** is a third-generation Napa resident and was elected to the Board of Supervisors in 2016. He earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering at California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) in San Luis Obispo and is a Registered Professional Engineer. He worked as Vice President and Owner of the local civil engineering firm RSA+, resigning from the firm to focus on his job as Napa County Supervisor. During his 20-year professional career, Supervisor Gregory was a leader in the local engineering field with a specialty in the planning, design, and construction of residential projects for both nonprofit and for-profit builders. Mr. Gregory's extensive history of community involvement includes service as the former Board Chair for the Napa Chamber of Commerce and Community Action Napa Valley and President of Leadership Napa Valley, Napa Engineers Society, and the Kiwanis Club of Napa. Mr. Gregory was actively involved as a member of the Vine Trail Engineering Committee, Joint City-County Affordable Housing Taskforce, the Airport Industrial Area Blue Ribbon Committee, the City of Napa Housing Element Update Committee 2007 and 2014, Napa County Transportation and Planning Agency's (NCTPA) Highway 29 Citizens Advisory Committee, and the Downtown Napa Specific Plan Steering Committee. He continues to demonstrate his commitment to Napa County through service to the Boys and Girls Club of Napa Valley, the Downtown Property and Business Improvement District (PBID), Brother Can You Spare A Dime Community Baseball Outings organization, and the Napa Composite High School Mt. Bike Team. Mr. Gregory joined the

**Rowena Korobkin, M.D.** was appointed to the MHB in 2012. Dr. Korobkin is a Board-Certified Physician Neurologist and Child Neurologist. She received her MD in 1971 from the University of California, San Francisco, trained in pediatrics at Children’s Hospital in Oakland, and neurology at UCSF. She is the author of numerous journal articles and books in her field. Dr. Korobkin’s current main clinical interest relates to epilepsy and other neurologic issues in people with developmental disabilities, and she is a member of the Professional Advisory board of the Epilepsy Foundation of Northern California. She is the Consulting Neurologist to Santa Rosa Community Health, the Pediatric Neurologist for the County of San Joaquin at the San Joaquin General Hospital, and the Consultant Neurologist to North Bay Regional Center and Redwood Coast Regional Center. Because of a close family member with serious mental health issues, Dr. Korobkin has been inspired to help influence the mental health delivery systems for Napa County.



**Shauna Lewis** was appointed to the Mental Health Board in 2023. She is a Lead Peer Mentor at Innovations Community Center where she works with individuals who live with mental health disorders and substance abuse, as well as homelessness. She has actively worked on her own recovery from these issues for the last 6 and a half years. Shauna is driven to give back to her community and to help advocate for others that are suffering in these areas.

**Kristyn Miles** was appointed to the Mental Health Board in 2018. She served as Chair of the Mental Health Board from 2019-2021 and previously served on the Community Outreach Workgroup. Her background as a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) has afforded her insight into both adult and pediatric populations with disabilities and special needs. Having worked as an SLP in various public and private institutions, she is passionate about increasing access and decreasing stigmatization of mental health services for all Napa County residents. Ms. Miles earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Saint Mary’s College of California and a Master of Science degree in Speech-Language Pathology from California State University, East Bay. She currently resides in American Canyon with her husband and three children.



**Cassidy Nolan** was appointed to the Mental Health Board in June 2023 to represent military veterans. Mr. Nolan served in the Marines as an Intelligence Specialist. After discharge from the Marines, he attended Napa Valley College, also serving as a Veterans Outreach Specialist. In 2016 he was named Veteran of the Year by Senator Bill Dodd. Following NVC, Mr. Nolan earned a BA in Business Administration from the University of California, Berkeley, and an MBA from San Francisco State University. He worked as Program Director Tony LaRussa’s Animal Rescue Foundation’s Pets and Vets, a program to support military veterans experiencing service related mental health conditions through the therapeutic benefits of living with Emotional Support Animals. Mr. Nolan is now Co-Founder and Managing Member of Mach 1 Hot Sauce LLC.

**Patricia Sullivan** was appointed to the Mental Health Board in 2021 to represent those who live with mental health conditions. Her personal life experiences have given her a sense of compassion and empathy for others facing mental health challenges. Ms. Sullivan is a strong proponent of the benefits of peer supports for mental health consumers. Since 2016, she has worked as an Independent Living Advocate at the Napa Office Disability Services & Legal Center, where she assists seniors and people with disabilities. Since 2013, she has been a volunteer with Community Health Napa Valley. Ms. Sullivan holds a bachelor’s degree in Hospitality Management from Nova Southeastern University and has completed both Culinary Arts and Accelerated Wine and Beverage Programs at The Culinary Institute of America.







**Orion Taraban** earned his master's degree and doctorate in clinical psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology. He is a licensed psychologist, serves on the faculty of psychology departments throughout the Bay Area, and has widely published in several APA journals. In his private practice, Dr. Taraban works with adults and adolescent boys, specializing in men's mental health. He is also the executive director of StellarGRE, the world's only empirically validated GRE test prep company. Dr. Taraban is the creator of PsychHacks, a successful short-form podcast inspired by his clinical practice, available on all major distribution platforms. He was appointed to the Mental Health Board in 2022.

**Heidi Van De Ryt** has lived experience from parenting her son who was diagnosed at age 16 with schizoaffective disorder plus alcohol and drug addiction. At the time, intensive in-patient mental health resources were non-existent locally, so she worked to educate herself about the mental health community and what resources were available nearby. Ms. Van de Ryt was appointed to that Mental health Board in 2021 with a strong desire to contribute her experience and voice as a parental advocate and champion for the mental health community.



**Daisy Zamora** was appointed to the Mental Health Board in 2023. She is a Wellness Youth Outreach Coordinator at Voices Youth Center in Napa where she sees how mental health impacts youth. In her role, she advocates for the mental health needs of youth and works towards improving their overall wellness. Ms. Zamora attends Napa Valley College where she is studying Sociology. She has been an active volunteer in the community, including being a Napa County Library teen volunteer from 2015 to 2020 and a member of the Teens Connect Leadership Council from 2019 to 2020. In 2020, as a high school senior, she shared her mental health story on stage in This Is My Brave – Napa Valley.

## Members Leaving the Board During the Past Year

*Thank you for serving on the MHB!*

**Edward Ortiz** was appointed to the Mental Health Board in 2021 and was the 2021-22 Vice Chair. He was previously the Chief Network Officer for the Health Plan of San Mateo and is currently a founding partner of Cruz Consulting Partners, a specialty consultancy focused on safety net health care. Mr. Ortiz has deep experience leveraging the resources of Medi-Cal and County-based services/supports to improve beneficiary wellness while optimizing health systems to improve care costs. Some of his notable accomplishments are the DHCS award-winning implementation of housing and health care programming and the development of community supports that are both now integral components of California Advancing and Innovating in Medi-Cal (CalAIM). Mr. Ortiz served in the Illinois National Guard as a veteran of the Gulf War and graduated from Northern Illinois University with a degree in business management.



**Keri Akemi-Hernandez** is proud of her Native American Heritage, with Mohawk, Seneca, and Apache lineage. She is a successful Indigenous, womxn, entrepreneur of multiple small business ventures, including Real Estate, Design, and Consulting services within the greater San Francisco Bay Area for over 21 years. Ms. Akemi-Hernandez joined the Mental Health Board in 2021 and is an active community leader who helps advocate for those who are often marginalized and underserved. She also serves on the Napa County Housing Commission, the Housing Element Advisory Committee, and the Mental Health Cultural Competency Advisory Committee. Ms. Akemi-Hernandez is motivated by the support of her children, and grandchild.

**Kathleen Chance** taught at the elementary and middle school levels in the Napa Valley Unified School District, primarily at Browns Valley Elementary School, where she also served as coordinator of the Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports Program and trained in Mindfulness for Educators. Concerned about the increase in mental health issues among youth and young adults, she wanted to make a difference for all, especially in the areas of stigma and stereotyping. Ms. Chance holds a BA from UC Davis and a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Dominican University of California. She continues with alum writing workshops and is a member of the California Writers Club, Napa Valley Branch. She and her husband Robert live in Napa. Ms. Chance was appointed to the Mental Health Board in 2020.



**Neil D'Silva** is a long-time resident of American Canyon with a great interest in and passion for mental health. In both his undergraduate career in Los Angeles and his time with the Peace Corps in China, he has been involved in social justice work and mental health peer support networks under the supervision of medical and/or mental health professionals. He has also worked as an EMT-Basic and volunteered at hospitals, schools, and with community organizations. He currently works for the federal government in a programmatic oversight role. Mr. D'Silva was appointed to the Mental Health Board in 2020.

**Zachariah Geyer** has lived experience with both physical and mental challenges. He works full-time as a Mental Health Worker Aide for Napa County Mental Health Division and is co-located two days week at Innovations Community Center running groups and doing peer support work. Mr. Geyer has been trained as a Peer Support Specialist PSS, Wrap Facilitator, Question/Pursue/Refer facilitator, and in both Adult and Child Mental Health First Aid amongst numerous other trainings. Prior to employment with the County, he had extensive volunteer experience, including, Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital in the Intensive Care Unit as a family support volunteer, as a speaker at National Alliance On Mental Illness (NAMI) meetings, at Buckelew Programs in the Family Services Unit, and at other organizations. Mr. Geyer is a Napa Native and joined the Mental Health Board in 2018.



**Tiffany Iverson** has been on the board since August of 2018. Since joining the Mental Health Board, she led a Work Group engaged in increasing public awareness of the board meetings as a bridge between the Napa County community needs and resources. She is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist working in private practice in the Napa community. Her work as a therapist has spanned both the private practice and non-profit worlds. As an intern therapist, she worked for Silverado MS and Napa HS and Aldea's Wolfe Center program. Ms. Iverson is passionate about serving underserved youth populations. She currently works with the general public and with out-patient psychiatric patients. Ms. Iverson received an AA in Liberal Arts from American River College, BS in Criminal Justice from Sacramento State University, and an MA in Counseling Psychology from the University of San Francisco. She lives in Napa with her husband

**E. Beth Nelsen** is a local documentary filmmaker, change maker, and conscious shaker. Ms. Nelsen was appointed to the Board in 2017. A Napa Valley College graduate, Ms. Nelsen earned her BA in Philosophy from UCLA and her M.A. in Film & Television at the University of Melbourne; she is a 2017 graduate of Leadership Napa Valley. Ms. Nelsen is an international guest speaker whose films have screened all over the globe. Her passions include advocacy for mental health, Indigenous Rights, LGBTQ equality, adoption, and identity, all of which have been fodder for her storytelling. She seeks collaboration on projects with potential for heavy social impact, not confined to only the screen. Ms. Nelsen resides in Napa with her family.



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### Napa County Health & Human Services Mental Health Division Staff:

Felix Bedolla, MHSA Project Manager  
Valerie Cahill, Assistant Deputy Director Mental Health  
Frank Congine, Assistant Deputy Director Mental Health  
Lynette Lawrence, Provider Services Coordinator  
Jennifer Menges, Quality Coordinator  
Mike Mills, Assistant Deputy Director Mental Health  
Dell Pratt, Veterans Services Officer  
Graciela Rodriquez Garcia, Children's Mental Health Services  
Sandy Schmidt, Staff Services Analyst  
Chelsea Stoner, Mobile Response Supervisor

### Napa County Health & Human Services Staff:

Kimberly Danner, Deputy Chief Fiscal Officer  
Jim Diel, Deputy Director, Health & Human Services Agency  
Amanda Jones, Assistant Director, Alcohol & Drug Services, Napa County Health & Human Services Agency  
Jennifer Yasumoto, Agency Director, Health & Human Services Agency

***Thank you to everyone in the community who works to provide the best mental health care system possible to the children and adults of Napa County!***