



**Alameda County  
Mental Health Advisory Board**

Contact the Mental Health Advisory Board at:

ACBH.MHBCcommunications@acgov.org

July 19, 2021

**Members:**

**Lee Davis**, Chair  
District 5

Alameda County Board of Supervisors  
1221 Oak St., #536

**L.D. Louis**, Vice Chair  
District 4

Oakland, CA 94612

**Marsha McLinnis**  
District 1

Re: MHAB Annual Report

**Lucy Hernandez**  
District 2

Dear Alameda County Board of Supervisors,

**Kurtis Riener**  
District 2

The Alameda County Mental Health Advisory Board (MHAB) is pleased to provide this Annual Report for FY 2020-2021.

**Cicley Winston**  
District 2

MHAB Statutory Authority and Duties

**Loren Farrar**  
District 3

The authority of the MHAB is established by California Welfare and Institutions Code Section 5600 et seq. In accordance with Welfare and Institutions Code Section 5604.2, the MHAB is statutorily required, among other things, to:

**Warren Cushman**  
District 3

**Ashlee Jemmott**  
District 3

- Review and evaluate the community's public mental health needs, services, facilities, and special problems in any facility within the county or jurisdiction where mental health evaluations or services are being provided, including, but not limited to, schools, emergency departments, and psychiatric facilities.

**Brian Bloom**  
District 4

- Review any county agreements entered into pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code Section 5650 and make recommendations regarding concerns identified within those agreements.

**Jessie C. Slafter**  
District 4

- Advise the Alameda County Board of Supervisors and the Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services Director as to any aspect of the local mental health program.

**Thu A. Bui**  
District 5

- Review and approve the procedures used to ensure citizen and professional involvement at all stages of the planning process.

**Juliet Leftwich**  
District 5

- Perform such additional duties as may be assigned to the Mental Health Advisory Board by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors.

**Board of Supervisors  
Representative:**

**Rebekah Kharrazi**  
District 3

Overview of MHAB Activities in FY 2020-2021

The MHAB worked diligently to carry out its duties over the last year, despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The full MHAB held regular monthly meetings, as well as one special meeting and its annual strategy meeting/retreat. Regular monthly meetings were also held by the MHAB's Executive

Committee and its three standing committees: the Criminal Justice Committee, the Adult Committee and the Children's Committee. In addition, ad hoc committee meetings were held to: 1) update and draft proposed amendments to the MHAB bylaws; and 2) create a framework and monitoring structure for the MHAB to carry out its oversight duties.

In its advisory capacity, the MHAB sent correspondence to the Board of Supervisors:

- On April 24, 2020, expressing the MHAB's opposition to the \$85 million request by the Sheriff and Health Care Service Agency for additional Santa Rita Jail staffing.
- On October 6, 2020, setting forth the MHAB's specific recommendations regarding actions the Board of Supervisors could take to reduce the number of seriously mentally ill individuals at the Jail.
- On March 3, 2021, opposing the proposed discontinuance of Intensive Outpatient Programs at Fairmont and Highland Hospital (this letter was sent to the Alameda Health System Board of Trustees, as well as to the Board of Supervisors).
- On June 17, 2021, expressing the MHAB's strong support for the "Care First, Jail Last" Resolution and urging the Board of Supervisors to reallocate half of the money previously earmarked for Santa Rita Jail and approve it instead for community-based treatment and housing that will reduce the number of mentally ill people who are incarcerated.

Copies of the correspondence are attached.

All MHAB meetings were held remotely, other than a meeting of a small group of MHAB members who participated in a guided tour of the facility formerly known as the Glenn E. Dyer Detention Facility. One of the MHAB recommendations to the Board of Supervisors of October 6, 2020, was that the building, which has been vacant for two years, be retrofitted and repurposed for use as a mental health treatment facility. We were pleased to learn that Behavioral Health Care Services has recommended that the GSA complete a feasibility study, and that the request has been sent to the Board of Supervisors for approval.

Summaries of MHAB committee activities are provided below.

#### Criminal Justice Committee

During the last year, the Criminal Justice Committee held monthly meetings, as well as one special meeting, focusing primarily on ways to implement the Board of Supervisors' directive to reduce the number of seriously mentally ill individuals at Santa Rita Jail. Discussion topics included, among other things, increased opportunities for diverting defendants out of the criminal justice system and into the appropriate level of community-based mental health treatment, addressing the deplorable treatment of mentally ill offenders at Santa Rita Jail, and the need for better discharge planning when defendants leave jail and re-enter the community.

To facilitate and inform these discussions, the Committee invited a variety of speakers to attend its meetings, including:

- Katie Kramer, from the Bridging Group, who spoke about the Safe Landing Project, a program that offers services to newly released inmates via a trailer that is parked outside of the jail;
- Dr. Lorenza Hall, Senior Management Analyst with ACBH Data Services, who presented data in response to the MHAB's November 2020 request for information about the population of mentally ill individuals at Santa Rita Jail;
- Juan Taizan, ACBH Forensic, Diversion and Re-Entry Director, who spoke about his background and vision for his new position;

- Dr. Aaron Chapman, ACBH's Medical Director and Chief Medical Officer, who spoke about the challenges in forming a definition of the term "seriously mentally ill," that would allow ACBH and the MHAB to objectively evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to reduce that population at Santa Rita Jail.

Criminal Justice Committee meetings were very well attended and included robust participation by a variety of groups, including family members, law enforcement representatives and mental health care providers.

#### Adult Committee

The MHAB Adult Committee reviews and discusses adult and/or older adult systems of care. Fiscal year 20/21 brought with it the precautionary and protective measures required by the COVID 19 pandemic. The Committee has appreciated the expertise and community input on various topics heard at the monthly meetings. Speakers at Committee meetings included:

- Francesca Tenenbaum, Director of Patient's Rights Advocates of Alameda County, a program of the Mental Health Association of Alameda, which monitors psychiatric facilities for compliance with codes and regulations, and investigates complaints of abuse and neglect at those facilities;
- Kate Jones, Director of Adult/Older Adult Services at Alameda County BHCS;
- Terri Daugherty and Gloria Sawiris, who provided an overview of services provided at John George Psychiatric Pavilion; and
- Kerry Abbott, Director of Homeless Care and Coordination at Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, Teresa Pasquini and Lauren Rettagliata, former members of the Contra Costa Mental Health Advisory Board, and Margo Dashiell, with the East Bay Supportive Housing Coalition.

The Adult Committee also spearheaded the March 3, 2021, letter from the MHAB to Alameda Health System and the Board of Supervisors raising concerns about the proposed closure of the Inpatient Outreach Programs.

#### Children's Committee

The Children's Committee held monthly meetings. One of the central focuses of those meetings was the serious impact the pandemic has had on children and on transitional age youth (TAY) and how that has impacted the mental health care they receive. Speakers included:

- Nathan Hobbs, ACBH Alcohol and Drug Program Administrator, who presented on substance abuse services for this population;
- Damon Eaves, Associate Director of Children's System of Care, who led a discussion about Telehealth and the challenges created by virtual learning and therapy sessions, since many services for young people are school based; (Lisa Carlisle, Director of Child and Young Adult System of Care, also presented. Damon retired.)
- Representatives of Boldly Me and the Office of Family Empowerment;
- MHAB member Jessie Slafter, who led a discussion on dependent youth and gaps in services for this population, including the limitation on the number of beds for young people who may be struggling with substance abuse.

#### Conclusion/ Next Steps

The MHAB is proud of its work over the last year and looks forward to another productive year ahead. While we cannot predict all of the challenging issues we will face, we do plan to provide a response to the April 22, 2021 Report of the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, "Investigation of Alameda County, John George Psychiatric Hospital and Santa Rita Jail," which describes serious gaps in the County's mental health care system and details the appalling conditions at Santa Rita Jail. The Criminal Justice Committee dedicated one of its meetings to the report, where it had the opportunity to hear from and question Department of Justice

Attorney Jessica Polansky. During that meeting, the Committee also heard from many family members who were deeply concerned about the report's failure to acknowledge the critical need for acute and subacute facilities. The MHAB shares that concern.

The MHAB is excited to support the Board of Supervisors' "Care First, Jail Last" Resolution and to work with the varied array of supportive stakeholders on the implementation of the Resolution. We applaud the Board of Supervisors for its public commitment to a shift in priorities from incarceration to evidence-based mental health treatment.

The MHAB also looks forward to finalizing the monitoring framework and structure that has been proposed to ensure that the MHAB carries out its statutory oversight duties in an efficient and effective manner.

Please let us know if you have any questions or comments about this report. Thank you for giving the members of the MHAB the opportunity to be of service to you and to our community.

Sincerely,

Lee Davis, MHAB Chair

L.D. Louis, MHAB Vice-Chair