

## ***Communication from the Office of the ACBH Director***

**DATE:** February 4, 2022

**TO:** All ACBH Staff & Stakeholders

**FROM:** Karyn L. Tribble, PsyD, LCSW, Director 

**SUBJECT:** **ACBH STRATEGIC PLANNING INITIATIVE - LAUNCH**

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Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services (ACBH) recognizes that the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic has posed a major threat to the overall wellness of our communities. We also recognize that the need for social justice reform and a focus on health equity continues to tantamount to the behavioral health experience of the general population. Knowing that key determinants of health, including those factors which continue to disproportionately influence communities of color, highlight the fact that there is much to do within our department and the community; continue to highlight the need for community engagement and action. Our Health Care Services Agency (HCSA) has been committed to advancing efforts to address many of these issues within Alameda County and statewide.

In early 2021, the Kaiser Family Foundation reported that 41% of adults in the United States reported symptoms of anxiety and/or depressive disorders; 13% of adults reported new or increased substance use due to COVID-19 related stress, and nearly 100,000 individuals died from drug overdoses between March 2020 and 2021. While we are currently still experiencing the effects of the pandemic, vaccinations and treatment allow us to begin to envision and build a post-pandemic response to meet the increased need for trauma informed, and equitable mental health and substance use disorder services. All of these factors have brought our department towards a renewed focus on the timely initiation of strategic planning and a process that opens the door to our clients, families, and varied stakeholders. Our ultimate goal of this phase of strategic planning is to help us chart a future course; and normalize discussions on race, racial equity, and community engagement.

**Beginning in February 2022**, ACBH will undertake this Strategic Planning Initiative work with a multitude of stakeholders, organizations, and communities across the County to create a long-term strategic plan in order to help our system to:

- Develop a more intentional focus on serving the diverse needs of the entire community, including those communities of color who have been traditionally underserved, unserved, or inappropriately served.



- Improve communication and collaboration between ACBH and the communities it serves.
- Identify where there are critical gaps in programs and services that can improve the behavioral health and mental well-being of individuals and communities; and inform funding and policies to address those gaps.
- Improve timely access to high quality, effective community-based services based in both research-defined and community-defined evidence.
- Eliminate behavioral health inequities in access to and quality of public behavioral health services.
- Increase the emphasis upon behavioral health prevention and early intervention strategies; and
- Create strategies to help address the social determinants of behavioral health which are exacerbated by racism, such as inadequate housing, employment, education, and elevated risk for justice involvement.

I am pleased to announce that ACBH will work with the *California Institute for Behavioral Health Solutions (CIBHS)* and the *Equity and Wellness Institute (EqWI)* to lead our strategic planning process. *CIBHS* is a statewide, behavioral health consulting organization dedicated to promoting equity and quality in public behavioral health. *EqWI* works to cultivate well-being for public and private institutions and the communities they serve. Using a community based participatory research framework, *CIBHS* and *EqWI* will partner with local community-based organizations to facilitate a process with their stakeholders, constituents, and residents to inform and shape the direction and recommendations of our strategic plan. *CIBHS* will also engage individuals in key informant interviews to ensure a diverse perspective during the development phase. We anticipate that the planning process, including outreach and engagement of many of our key stakeholders, will be a multi-year process including as many sources of input as possible.

We are excited to begin this work with you and look forward to sharing the results of the initial findings and updates on these efforts soon and over the course of many months. We invite you to actively participate in this process through interviews, surveys, open forums, or facilitated through a host of community organizations with whom we hope to partner.

If you have questions or suggestions to offer our department, please feel free to email [BHCSDirector@acgov.org](mailto:BHCSDirector@acgov.org) at any time.

Thank you in advance for partnering with us on this journey.