

THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COMMISSION OF SAN FRANCISCO

Annual Report: July 1, 2023–June 30, 2024



Prepared for

**The Mayor and Board of Supervisors of the
City and County of San Francisco**

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Behavioral Health Commission (BHC) of San Francisco (SF) submits this Annual Report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024 in accordance with the California Welfare and Institutions Code, Section 5604.2. The commission met 11 times during this period with quorum achieved on the part of the membership. Nine commissioners had legal standing. The meetings and discussions continued to focus on important presentations and decisions and included the public's participation.

The key themes in 2023–2024 focused on affordable housing and access to essential behavioral health services, the grievance process, and recruitment and training of BHC staff and commissioners. The BHC recognized outstanding programs and individuals for their work in serving the citizens in San Francisco who experience mental health or substance use conditions, and who are also without stable housing; conducted program reviews with recommendations forwarded to the SF Director of Behavioral Health Services.

The BHC proposed three **resolutions and commendations** and forwarded them to the SF Board of Supervisors for their consideration (see detailed list on page 8). Four **program reviews** (on p. 8) were conducted as in-person site visits and required additional coordination in scheduling meeting times due to the aftereffects of the COVID-19 mandates. Hence, two of the site visits did not occur until early 2024. Despite these drawbacks, we learned a great deal about the agencies, their staffs and clients, and the services they provided.

The BHC hosted four **educational presentations** that included speakers from Conard House, SF Behavioral Health Services (BHS), the California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards/Commissions, and various mental health service providers (see page 9).

Further, the BHC communicated its findings electronically on the county's annual performance outcome data to the California Behavioral Health Planning Council, BHS director and SF Board of Supervisors. To respond effectively to the survey, the BHC Clerk communicated with BHS staff and, for each department, compiled the **performance outcome data** and reports on the county's delivery of behavioral health services (see p. 10).

The needs for behavioral health services in San Francisco continued to increase despite innovative programs (e.g., transgender support, vocational training). In FY 2023-24, the BHC continued to advocate for culturally affirming and evidence-based practices for all services, strengthening the integration of substance use and mental health treatment to ensure that both disorders are treated more effectively, and for increasing the number of therapists, psychologists and psychiatrists working in the Public Health and Behavioral Health Services departments.

Many of our citizens continued to face enormous challenges in trying to address issues related to mental wellness and substance use, and their intersections with homelessness. We continued to face challenges in trying to maintain a quorum of commission members.

However, as we persist in **advocating for adults and families** in San Francisco experiencing severe mental illness, we will continue to identify outstanding programs and individuals, execute program reviews and resolutions, and host educational presentations that inform commission members and the public about the needs of individuals who use the behavioral health and housing programs and services provided by the city and county.

At this year’s BHC retreat, we discussed in more detail our priority goals for program reviews and resolutions. The major issues we planned to address in 2023–2024 include:

- Mental health challenges and substance use in all educational settings.
- Need for transgender training and support for behavioral health programs and staff.
- Better access to behavioral health services for elderly and isolated seniors and those with disabilities while struggling with mental health challenges in San Francisco.
- The need for more open interactions between the departments of Homelessness and Supportive Housing and the various communities around the services that are required.

Acknowledgements

We want to express our sincere gratitude to all the members of the BHC Rules and Reports Committee who worked diligently to help develop this report. The committee members included: Commissioners Lisa Wynn, Carletta Jackson-Lane, Vice-President of SF MHEF, Kescha Mason, Alex Humphrey, Harriette S. Stevens, Committee Chair, and BHC Clerk Amber Gray.



Standing from left: Lisa Wynn, Alex Humphrey, Harriette S. Stevens, Carletta Jackson-Lane, Lisa Williams, Peter Murphy. Seated: Liza Murawski and Kescha Mason

II. INTRODUCTION

The BHC of San Francisco, formerly named the Mental Health Board, was established in 1983 as mandated by the Bronzan-McCorquodale Act within the Welfare and Institutions Code, Section 5604.2. The BHC is committed to the following duties:

- Review and evaluate the community’s behavioral health needs, services, facilities, and special problems.
- Review County agreements entered into pursuant to Section 5650.
- Advise the Board of Supervisors and the Director of Behavioral Health Services (BHS) as to any aspect of the local behavioral health care system.
- Review and approve the procedures used to ensure citizen and professional involvement at all stages of the planning process.
- Submit an annual report to the mayor and supervisors on the needs and performance of San Francisco’s behavioral health system.
- Review and make recommendations on applicants for the appointment of the director of Behavioral Health Services prior to the vote of the governing body. The commission shall be included in the selection process prior to the vote of the governing body.
- Review and comment on the county’s/city’s performance outcome [WIC 5604.2(a)(7)] and communicate its findings to the California Behavioral Health Planning Council.
- Assess the impact of the realignment of services from the State to the County on services delivered to clients and on the local community.

The Mission of BHC

The Behavioral Health Commission of San Francisco represents and ensures the inclusion of the diverse voices of local consumers, citizens, and stakeholders in advising how behavioral health services are administered and provided.

Through its State and County mandates, the Behavioral Health Commission advises, reviews, advocates, and educates; with the aim of having that advice integrated, incorporated, and reflected in the implementation of Behavioral Health policy; with the ultimate goal of ensuring quality behavioral health services.

Adopted October 12, 1994

III. SAN FRANCISCO BHC COMMISSION MEMBERS AND STAFF

FYE June 2023	FYE JUNE 2024
Seat 1, Bahlam Javier Vigil, BA	Seat 1, Bahlam Javier Vigil, BA
Seat 2, Genesis Vasconez	Seat 2, Genesis Vasconez
Seat 3, Carletta Jackson-Lane, JD*	Seat 3, Carletta Jackson-Lane, JD
Seat 4, Terezie Bohrer, RN, MSW, CLNC, Resigned April 10, 2023	Seat 4, vacant
Seat 5, vacant	Seat 5, vacant
Seat 6, Kescha S. Mason, M.Div., MCL	Seat 6, Kescha S. Mason, M.Div., MCL
Seat 7, Vacant	Seat 7, vacant
Seat 8, Stephen Banuelos, Retired, LCSW	Seat 8, Stephen Banuelos, Retired, LCSW
Seat 9, vacant	Seat 9, vacant
Seat 10, Harriette S. Stevens, Ed.D.*	Seat 10, Harriette S. Stevens, Ed.D.
Seat 11, Lisa Williams	Seat 11, Lisa Williams
Seat 12, Toni Parks-Resigned March 15, 2024	Seat 12, vacant
Seat 13, Lisa Wynn	Seat 13, Lisa Wynn
Seat 14, Liza M. Murawski	Seat 14, Liza M. Murawski
Seat 15, vacant	Seat 15, vacant
Seat 16, vacant	Seat 16, vacant
Seat 17, vacant ⁺	Seat 17, vacant

* Starting February 1, 2020, termed-out commissioners could attend BHC meetings and vote until a new commissioner was appointed by a district supervisor or the SF Rules Committee.

⁺ No Board of Supervisor member attended BHC meetings

BHC Staff

Amber Gray, Clerk, 3/1/ 2022 to present

IV. LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Greetings to the SF Behavioral Health Community,

It is an honor to present the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the San Francisco Behavioral Health Commission (BHC). Fiscal year 2023-2024 was a pivotal time for the commission as we built upon our commitment to advocate for the behavioral health and wellness needs of those who call San Francisco home. While many challenges remain, we embraced new opportunities to foster resilience and equitable access to behavioral health services in communities of need.

This year, our focus continued to center on improving the grievance process with Behavioral Health Services (BHS). In collaboration with BHS, we worked to enhance transparency and develop user-friendly systems that better serve clients and providers. We continued to champion culturally affirming and evidence-based practices across all programs while reinforcing the integration of mental health and substance use treatment for individuals with co-occurring disorders.

In 2023-2024, we achieved significant milestones, including conducting site visits with various community-based organizations and their affiliated programs. These visits provided invaluable insights into the positives of support services, as well as ongoing challenges faced by service providers and the communities they support. The BHC also arranged educational presentations with representatives from behavioral health leaders doing the work to serve communities in need. These sessions were meaningful and deepened our understanding of the critical issues of the communities served and provided guidance for our future priorities.

Looking forward, we remain steadfast in addressing the urgent needs of our communities. Housing insecurity and behavioral health issues continue to be critical factors that impact communities in the city and county, and we will persist in advocating for more supportive options tailored to individuals experiencing homelessness and mental health and substance use challenges. We also recognize the ongoing importance of addressing behavioral health in educational settings and advancing training that support transgender people. Our dedication to improving access to behavioral health care for vulnerable populations and fostering collaborations between the departments of BHS and Public Health, and the communities we serve, remain unwavering.

We extend heartfelt appreciation to the BHC Rules and Reports Committee members for their tireless efforts, the California Association of Local Behavioral Health and Boards/Commissions (CALBHB/C) for their training and coaching services for new commissioners and staff. A very special thanks to BHC Commissioners Harriette S. Stevens, Ed.D. (Rules & Reports Committee Chair), Lisa Wynn, Alex Humphrey, Carletta Jackson-Lane, J.D., and to Amber Gray (BHC Clerk) for their invaluable contributions.

In gratitude,

Kescha S. Mason, M. Div, MCL
Co-Chair, SF BHC

Liza Murawski
Co-Chair, SF BHC

V. BHC GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS: July 1, 2023–June 30, 2024

A. Resolutions and Commendations

- **BHC 3.0 RESOLUTION:** (Thursday, November 21, 2024) The SF BHC urges the Board of Supervisors to honor the work of the late Reverend Cecil Williams, retired pastor of Glide Memorial Church, San Francisco, by dedicating and naming a section of the Tenderloin district in his honor. Through the various programs Rev. Williams implemented at Glide, such as Facts on Crack, he championed the importance of culturally responsive mental health and substance use services, that became known as behavioral health services, in San Francisco.
- **BHC 2.0 RESOLUTION:** (Thursday, February 20, 2025) The BHC commends the Progress Foundation for its work over the last 56 years in addressing the needs of individuals in San Francisco who experience mental disorders and homelessness. The services the Foundation provides should serve as a blueprint for programs that view community members as integral to community interventions, such as spreading awareness about mental health, creating safe spaces for clients, and encouraging members to share their experiences, and for the delivery of mental health services.
- **BHC 2.0. RESOLUTION:** (Thursday, March 20, 2025) The BHC hereby urges the Board of Supervisors to recognize the work of Shakirah Simley for her outstanding leadership, dedication and service to the Booker T. Washington Community Service Center and the Fillmore community and expresses gratitude for her unwavering commitment to social equity, behavioral health wellness, and community empowerment.

B. Program Reviews

In 2023–2024, as part of our duties to review and evaluate the community’s behavioral health needs, services, facilities, and special problems, the BHC commissioners took part in four (4) program reviews that highlighted residential treatment services provided in San Francisco. The following reviews included supportive housing living environments that emphasized evidence-based recovery methods and cultural and spiritual traditions to foster social reintegration for the residents to reunite with their families, crisis residential treatment services for adults with acute mental health challenges, and treatment for Native American residents in San Francisco struggling with substance use disorders. The program reviews conducted in fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, included:

- Dore Urgent Care Wednesday, on May 22, 2024
- Progress Foundation's Avenues, Tuesday, August 27, 2024,
- Dore Residence, Friday, August 30, 2024
- Friendship House, Thursday, September 5, 2024

The two-person visits to these programs, in some cases, called for more follow-up discussion to answer questions and further address important issues. The commissions will either request for follow-up visits to some of the sites, or have the organizations make presentations to the entire commission in the future.

C. Educational Presentations at Commission Meetings for Year Ending June 2024

- May 16, 2024, Item 2.1: Overview of services provided through the Department of Children & Family Systems of Care, Farahnaz K. Farahmand, Ph.D. Director
- May 16, 2024, Item 3.0 Grievance Department of Services Quality management, by Appeals Officer
- September 19, 2024, Item 2.1: Implementation of the Peer Specialist Certification program [SB803], Rams Peer Specialist [SB803]
- October 17, 2024, Item 2.0: Overdose Prevention Teams, Office of Overdose Prevention | Population Behavioral Health, San Francisco Department of Public Health
- October 17, 2024, Item 2.1: Implementation of the Peer Specialist Certification program [SB803 Peer Specialist], Mental Health Association of San Francisco
- November 21, 2024, Item 2.0: Swords to Plow Shares, Tramecia Garner, Executive Director
- California Association of Local Behavioral Health and Boards/Commissions (**CALBHB/C**): Support is provided to all 59 of CA's local and statewide Advisory Boards. Commissioner Stevens provided regular updates on the association's work.

Note: All BHC agendas and minutes can be found at

<https://www.sf.gov/departments/behavioral-health-commission>

D. BHC Committees and Activities

1. From July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, in addition to the **Executive Committee**, the BHC's Standing Committees included:
 - **Implementation Committee:** Steven Banuelos, Chair; focused on the need to make housing a major part of policy conversation and to assure that the housing needs of the homeless population were highlighted.
 - **Site Visit Committee:** Liza Murawski, Chair; worked to help assure the evaluation of the community's behavioral health needs, services, facilities, and special problems and mandated program reviews were implemented.
2. Activities conducted on behalf of the BHC consisted of:
 - BHC co-chairs met **monthly** with BHS Director Hillary Kunins, MD.
 - Commissioners attended **public health-related community meetings** in their capacity as representatives of the commission.

- Re-elected member of the **CALBHB/C Governing Board**: Commissioner Stevens.
- Participated in **statewide board and commissioner and staff trainings** provided by the CALBHB/C: BHC Commissioners Murawski, Stevens, Wynn.

E. BHC Staff Activities

Clerk Gray’s contributions to the mission of the BHC included regular participation in statewide staff trainings and quarterly meetings. The clerk also met with BHC program staff to collect information on the county’s annual performance outcome data, including the delivery of behavioral health services, for inclusion in the California Behavioral Health Planning Council’s annual report [WIC 5604.2 (a)(7)].

VI. BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS

The SF Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) reported on the statewide realignment plan and changes to the MHSA Three-Year Draft Report and Budget. The proposed plan expands and modernizes the State’s mental health system and housing for citizens living on the streets. An update was given at the BHC meeting on March 21, 2024, by Jessica N. Brown, Director of Office of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion/MHSA.

VII. BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – HIGHLIGHTS


Commissioners identified the following needs and recommendations to help guide the BHC’s work:

- Continue to advocate for **behavioral health services and supportive housing** for people who are homeless and experiencing acute mental health issues and substance use disorders.
- While the BHC site visits to the community’s behavioral health facilities revealed that the staff were working hard, facilities were clean and welcoming, and staff regularly engaged with residents, several challenges emerged from their reports. They included: the need to **improve outreach and explore further community collaboration** that enhance resources for the residents; the importance of DPH **fostering collaboration with the community agencies** to actively encourage innovation and enhance problem solving; the need to address staffing shortages post-COVID-19, and **increase staff pay or employ more peer specialists** to help expand outreach to underserved communities. One of the sites is operating at only 50% capacity though we know the need for these services is great. The staff also identified the need to expand services at the residential facilities, such as providing fitness equipment on-site or access to a nearby gym facility, to **address the social needs of the younger residents**.
- Assure that **culturally affirming and evidence-based practices** are part of all services. The BHC continues its work to assure that DPH-funded behavioral health providers are providing effective, equitable, and high-quality care and services that are responsive to clients with diverse cultural health beliefs and practices and communication needs.

- Provide regular **training opportunities** for BHC commissioners so they are more effective. Ethics training is required per GOV 53234 – 53235.2. According to guidance from the CALBHB/C, new and veteran commissioners will gain a better understanding of the duties of California’s mental/behavioral health boards/commissions through regular in-person and online training (<https://www.calbhbc.org/training.html>).
- Continue to promote the **integration of substance use and mental health treatment** to ensure both conditions are treated effectively. As part of an effective continuum of care system, the primary care doctor, behavioral health care manager, and psychiatrist must work together to provide quality care and monitor patient progress.
- Develop plans for recruiting a Transitional Age Youth and an employee of the local school district to serve on the commission.

VIII. SAMPLE RESOLUTION

SAN FRANCISCO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COMMISSION



**Resolution Commending
Progress Foundation, Innovation Behavioral Health Services
Thursday, February 20, 2025**

WHEREAS the Progress Foundation is dedicated to promoting rehabilitation and recovery for individuals experiencing mental health conditions, fostering the highest possible level of independence and self-determination for those they serve.

WHEREAS the foundation has a rich history, established in 1969 amidst the de-institutionalization movement, with consistent leadership under Executive Director Steve Fields, that focused on supporting individuals transitioning from state psychiatric hospitals into community settings.

WHEREAS the foundation recognizes that local treatment systems have historically been ill-equipped to support individuals with mental illness, and therefore, it has committed itself to developing supportive, community-based programs that prevent individuals from returning to institutions or correctional facilities.

WHEREAS their recovery model emphasizes connectedness, hope, identity, empowerment, and the importance of treating all individuals with respect and dignity, thus ensuring that each of us makes conscious efforts to eliminate labeling and discrimination.

WHEREAS the foundation's crisis stabilization units, acute diversion units, residential treatment facilities, year-long transitional housing, supported and independent living options, and referral systems are critical components of their comprehensive approach to mental health care.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Progress Foundation has reaffirmed its commitment to enhancing the quality and accessibility of mental health services in the community, continually striving for improvement and innovation in their programs and practices and upholding their mission to empower clients on their path to recovery and independence.

FURTHER RESOLVED that the San Francisco Behavioral Health Commission expresses our gratitude and commends the Progress Foundation for its work over the last 56 years in addressing the needs of individuals in the City and County of San Francisco who experience mental disorders and homelessness. The services that Progress Foundation provides should serve as a blueprint for programs that view community members as integral to community interventions, such as spreading awareness about mental health, creating safe spaces for clients, and encouraging members to share their experiences, and for the delivery of mental health services in the community.

Approved and adopted on this date, Thursday, February 20, 2025.

Kescha S. Mason, BHC Co-chair

Liza Murawski, BHC Co-chair