



Human Services Alliance of Contra Costa

To: Measure X Community Advisory Board
From: Human Services Alliance of Contra Costa
Re: Comments for hearing on mental and behavioral health, developmental disabilities
Date: June 22, 2021

Dear Advisory Board Members,

I am pleased to submit, on behalf of the Human Services Alliance of Contra Costa (the Alliance) the following comments for the hearing on mental and behavioral health and developmental disabilities on June 23, 2021.

About the Alliance

The Human Services Alliance is composed of about 35 human services organizations, including most of the community based behavioral health provider organizations (CBOs) in Contra Costa. We partner closely with Contra Costa Behavioral Health Services department (CCBHS) on coordinating and delivering services in the County, including on a number of improvement processes such as non-police emergency response, Health Services strategic planning, and others. We are grateful to CCBHS and the Board of Supervisors for critical additional support during the COVID pandemic, in the form of increasing fee for service per unit rates for Medi-Cal funded services.

The Role of CBOs in the Behavioral Health System

- There are 39 community based behavioral health and substance abuse treatment organizations in Contra Costa that have contracts with the County. (There are also CBOs that do not receive funding from the County.) They represent the backbone of the County's behavioral health system.
- Combined, these organizations have service contracts with the County totaling ~\$80 million.
- This represents about 65% of CCBHS's expenditures on behavioral health. Since CBO costs are lower than County provided services, the percentage of CBO services provided is higher than 65%.
- CBOs are rooted in the community and provide a wide range of services in all parts of the County, including but not limited to: foster care; mental health services for children, youth and adults; residential and outpatient substance abuse treatment; school-based programs; prevention and early intervention; domestic violence programs; housing and housing support, mobile crises.
- CBOs primarily serve low-income people. Sources of mental health funding (through the County) include: Medi-Cal, MHSA, Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT), HUD, the County General Fund, and other sources.
- CBOs operate in a patchwork system composed of: public mental health system that includes both CBOs and county-operated programs; commercial insurance providers such as Kaiser; and licensed providers in private practice. CBOs adapted and innovated to provide novel services during the COVID pandemic through telehealth, and added other services such as delivering food and computers and tablets to families in need.

Challenges Facing CBOs



Human Services Alliance of Contra Costa

- **California's new minimum wage and exempt salary requirements** have increased costs considerably, while there has been no commensurate increase in the size of contracts.
 - A recent survey of Alliance members found that this has resulted in an average cost increase of ~\$330,000 per (large) organization. This represents a very significant financial challenge that threatens CBOs' abilities to continue to provide services.
- **Competitive pressure.** CBOs face increasing competition to hire and retain skilled practitioners, resulting in a high vacancy rate and rapidly increasing turnover:
 - The average CBO starting compensation for clinicians is ~\$65,000.
 - The County's average starting salary is significantly higher, likely in the \$80,000 – 85,000 range, not to mention generous health and retirement benefits.
 - Kaiser recently raised the base salary of its' licensed clinicians to more than \$110,000, and offers free health care.
 - CBO's are thus losing clinicians at an alarming rate. The survey found:
 - The average vacancy rate for direct care staff is 25%.
 - The #1 cause for vacancies is compensation.
 - The average number of additional people that could be served per organization if they were fully staffed is 171 (based on 10 organizations answering this question). The total community residents who are not being served, for just 10 organizations, is 1,718.

Proposed Solutions

In brief, Measure X funds could significantly improve mental health services in Contra Costa through:

- **Sustain:** Invest in sustaining existing services by leveraging additional funding from the County to draw down federal and state matching funds. For example a \$250,000 additional investment by the County would leverage more than \$11 million in matching funds to support a 15% increase in contract expenditures. This would go a long way to allowing CBOs to offer more competitive compensation, and thus provide more services to the community.
- **Transform:** Invest in transformative programs and ideas that will be discussed by 2 Alliance members at the hearing (Fred Finch and Putnam Clubhouse).

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

On behalf of the Alliance,

Dan Geiger
Director

Members

A Better Way
Alternative Family Services
Bay Area Community Resources
Brighter Beginnings
Center for Human Development



Human Services Alliance of Contra Costa

Child Therapy Institute
Community Clinic Consortium
Community Options for Families and Youth
Community Health for Asian Americans
Contra Costa ARC
Contra Costa CASA
Contra Costa Youth Service Bureau
Early Childhood Mental Health Program
Fred Finch Youth & Family Services
Familias Unidas
Hope Solutions
Hume Center
Jewish Family & Community Services East Bay
La Clinica de la Raza
Latina Center
Lincoln Families
Mental Health Systems
Putnam Clubhouse
REACH
Rubicon Programs
Seneca Family of Agencies
Shelter Inc
STAND! For Families Free of Violence
Ujima Family Recovery Services
Uplift Family Services
Vistability
We Care Services for Children
Youth Homes, Inc.