



DIRECTOR'S NEWSLETTER: Year in Review



As 2024 comes to an end, I am reflecting on a year full of gratitude and accomplishments. This year, two BHRS offices celebrated significant milestones, several BHRS programs and staff were honored for their work and we continued to make progress in making mental health and substance use services more accessible and culturally responsive for the San Mateo County community. In January, I shared my hope that this newsletter would be a good nudge to remind us of the lives that we change and the impact we make, everyday. I'm proud of the stories and

experiences we have shared here this year and look forward to sharing more. As we move into the new year, let's continue to make this world a better place for all!

2024 Highlights

BHRS Workforce Updates

69 New Staff Members Since January 2024

Positions include:

- **1** Adult Psychiatrist
- **12** Interns
- **2** Mental Health Counselors
- **20** Marriage and Family Therapists
- **2** Mental Health Counselors
- **2** Peer Support Workers
- **8** Psychiatric Social Workers

January

The Behavioral Health Commission held their annual retreat and set goals for 2024, including to learn about drug and alcohol misuse treatment, conduct site visits and inspections and to continue supporting wellness literacy public training of mental health.

February

The Service Connect Criminal Justice Realignment Program was honored by the Board of Supervisors for receiving the San Mateo County STARS Award for outstanding customer service and program performance, aligning with the County's goals.

March

Beginning in March through November, BHRS staff and providers completed monthly trainings necessary to implement CalAIM, the reformation of the Medi-Cal system, into practice.

April

In partnership with [BHRS IMAT](#) and [Emergency Medical Services](#), as of April 1 all EMT's (paramedics staffing ambulances throughout the County) carry and are trained to administer Buprenorphine, promoting Medication Assisted Treatment access for those struggling with Opioid use.

May

Governor Newsom [visited the Cordilleras Health and Healing Campus](#) and commended County officials for an ambitious project that reflects the governor's twin priorities: improving mental health treatment and combatting the homelessness crisis.

June

Nearly 6,000 people attended the San Mateo County Pride Parade & Celebration: *Love at Our Core, Pride 2024!* Also, BHRS debuted the first video in a series highlighting what it's like to work at BHRS. [Watch it here](#) and stay tuned for more videos to come in 2025.

July

San Mateo County [launched](#) Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Court on July 1, providing community-based support for those with untreated serious mental illness.

August

The San Mateo County Mobile Crisis Response Team launched 24/7 service anywhere within San Mateo County. Since then, the team has responded to over 80 clients during behavioral health crisis.

September

BHRS partnered with more than 20 public agencies and community-based organizations to launch [United for Youth Vision 2030](#), a 6-year plan to enhance youth behavioral health and well-being. Also, the BHRS Office of Diversity and Equity [celebrated their 15th anniversary](#).

October

The Office of Consumer and Family Affairs (OCFA) celebrated their 20th anniversary. [Check out the video](#) to learn more about the office, its history and commitment to utilizing lived experience to support clients and families.

November

Three BHRS programs (Primary Care Interface, Transitional Aged Youth / YTAC and Youth Case Management) began the important transition to Integr8 Health (Epic), an electronic medical record system for all San Mateo County Health patients and clients. All BHRS programs are scheduled to switch to Epic by 2026.

December

As of November, BHRS clients began to move into Canyon Vista, a supportive housing residence on the new [Cordilleras Health and Healing Campus](#).

2024 Clients Served

From January to September 2024...



BHRS served **12,828 clients**. 11,397 clients utilized mental health services and 2,217 utilized alcohol and other drug services.



The Access Call Center received **13,595** calls.



15.3% (1,958) of clients **experienced homelessness**. 40.1% (899) of clients who accessed alcohol and other drug services experienced homelessness, while 13.3% (1,512) of clients who accessed mental health services experienced homelessness.



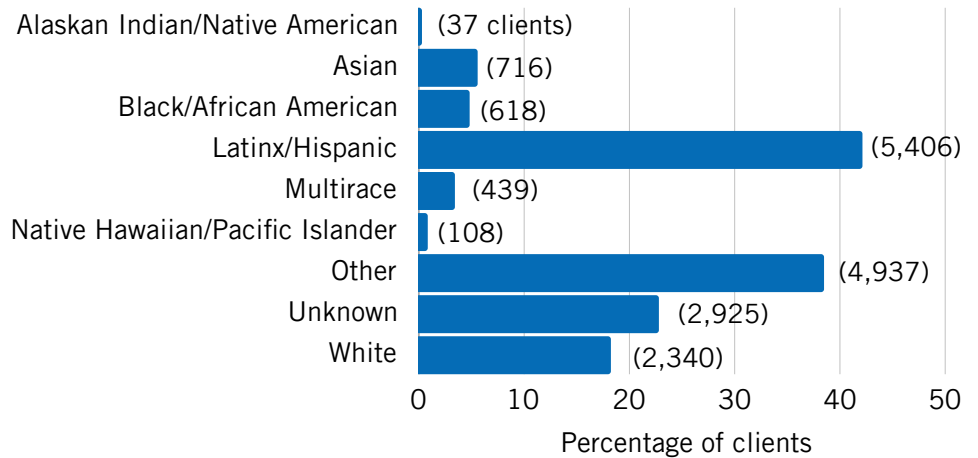
Gender Identity*

- 38.56% (4,947) Male
- 36.40% (4,669) Female
- 0.23% (29) Genderqueer
- 0.19% (25) Transgender Male
- 0.23% (29) Transgender Female
- 0.32% (41) Another
- 26.63% (3,416) Unknown

*Clients may be counted in more than one category because their gender identity may have changed over time.

Race/Ethnicity*

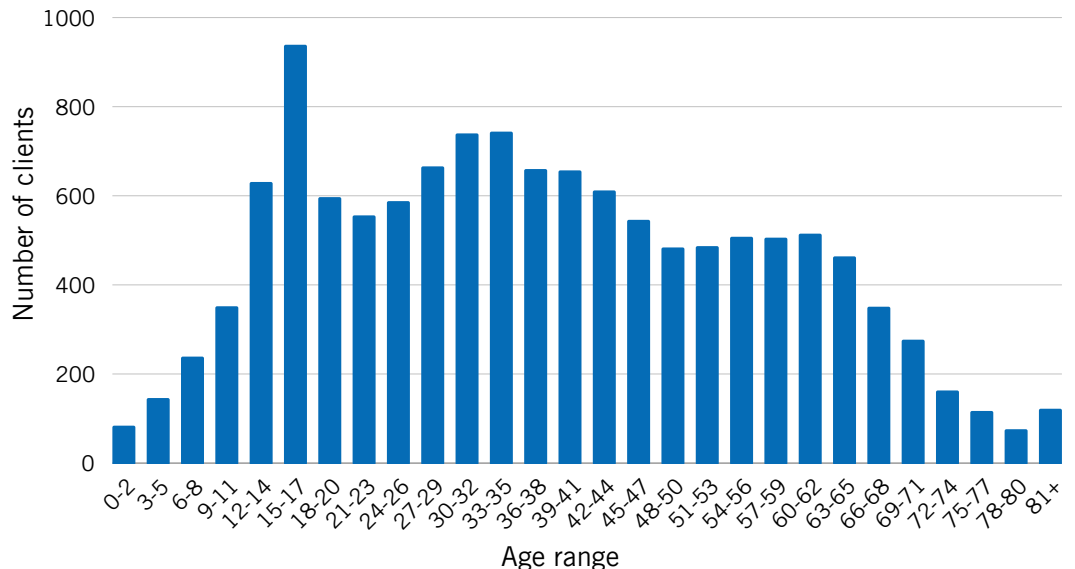
*Data includes individuals who identified with a particular race or ethnicity category, either solely by itself or in combination with another race or ethnicity category.



Primary Language

- 63.4% (8,143) English
- 24.7% (3,178) Spanish
- 0.98% (126) Portuguese
- 0.63% (81) Tagalog
- 0.36% (46) Cantonese
- 0.23% (29) Mandarin
- 0.19% (25) Arabic
- 0.18% (23) Russian
- 0.14% (18) Vietnamese
- 0.09% (12) Turkish

Age



The Recovery Incentives Program: New Evidence-based CalAIM Benefit

Over the past year, BHRS has made significant steps towards implementing CalAIM, an overhaul of the Medi-Cal system. CalAIM's goal is to make Medi-Cal more equitable, coordinated and person-centered, improving care for both the physical and mental health needs of Californians. Through CalAIM, BHRS is expanding mental health and substance use disorder services through a number of initiatives, including the Recovery Incentives Program. California is grappling with a persistent substance use disorder crisis. Deaths related to cocaine, methamphetamine and other stimulants have soared in the past decade; in 2021, 65% of drug-related overdose deaths involved stimulants, compared to 22% in 2011.

Contingency Management (CM) is an evidence-based treatment that provides motivational incentives to treat individuals living with stimulant use disorder and support their path to recovery. It recognizes and reinforces individual positive behavior change, providing incentives to those who achieve target treatment outcomes such as testing negative for stimulants on drug tests. Unlike opioids, there are no FDA-approved medications to treat the use of methamphetamines, cocaine or other stimulants. CM is the only treatment that has demonstrated robust outcomes for individuals living with stimulant use disorder, including reduction or cessation of drug use and how long one remains in treatment.

To expand access to evidence-based treatments for stimulant use disorder and tackle the substance use disorder crisis, California is rolling out Medi-Cal coverage for contingency management services in 24 participating pilot counties, which includes 88% of the Medi-Cal population, through the Recovery Incentives Program. This initiative makes California the first state in the country to include CM as a Medi-Cal benefit and to assess the effectiveness of this treatment approach.

How it works: Eligible Medi-Cal members participate in a structured 24-week outpatient program, followed by six or more months of additional recovery support services such as individual and group counseling and peer support services. Individuals will be able to earn motivational incentives in the form of gift cards, with a value determined per treatment period.

In San Mateo County, Our Common Ground, which provides treatment for adults with substance use and mental health conditions, began to pilot this program in July 2024 and enrolled 10 clients in the first month of operation. By the end of September, there were 21 members that were screened for the first quarter of the pilot, and 20 participants were still stimulant free. We look forward to expanding this program and continuing to monitor results.

By Caprice Scott, BHRS CalAIM project manager and **Sheryl Uyan**, BHRS health services manager II in BHRS, Alcohol and Other Drug Services.

Recovery Connection Center Opening Builds Community, Sparks Gratitude

On September 12, Voices of Recovery celebrated the grand opening of the Recovery Connection Center at 650 Main Street in Redwood City. The Center provides opportunities for education, wellness, advocacy and support services to individuals seeking long-term recovery. Voices of Recovery is the only substance use / dual diagnosis peer-led organization in San Mateo County. Each staff member uses their personal journey to connect and empower those who come in seeking a safe environment with people on similar paths. Staff and community members alike connect and grow together while discovering how to live a lifestyle free from substance use and mental health challenges. At the opening event for the Recovery Connection Center, this poem was shared by Cyntheil L. Peppy Neal:



When I walked into the place,
Everyone had a smile on their face.
People were greeting me and saying their names,
It gave me so much joy that I came.
They gave out hugs and also some snacks,
I knew then I was coming back.
We sat and talked about our fears,
And sometimes we would even shed some tears.
All of a sudden I began to see,
There are others in the world struggling just like me.
I continued to come and it felt like I was home,
But when we are in group,
You better not be on your phone!
The people I met were one of a kind,
They will always remain in my heart and mind.
I found more ways to live life clean,
No longer was I walking around and being mean.
So I thank you all for being there today,
Because Voices definitely did Help Me To Find My Way.



By Cyntheil L. Peppy Neal