



DIRECTOR'S NEWSLETTER: Mid-Year Check In



Dr. Jei Africa

Happy summer! In this edition, I am excited to share with you three new achievements at BHRS: the launch of the Office of Improvement and Innovation (OII) and CARE Court and the opening of Kiku Crossing. OII is aimed at improving our infrastructures so we can best support our staff and clients. CARE Court is another tool in our toolbox designed to link those with untreated schizophrenia to services. Lastly, with the opening of Kiku Crossing, there will be nine additional housing units for behavioral health clients experiencing homelessness. And as we

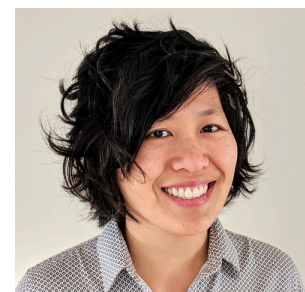
embrace the summer months, I invite you to go outside, take walks, get some fresh air and enjoy the warmth of the sun (don't forget to wear sunscreen)!

BHRS Names New Office of Improvement and Innovation

In the ever-shifting world of BHRS, with ongoing changes from federal and state government, prioritizing how BHRS tackles change is key to improved client outcomes and a supported workforce. It's important for us to develop infrastructure—or a set of systems and processes by which we operate—for how we make improvements; the infrastructure must be sustainable, flexible, and reflective of staff and client needs. To ensure we are best equipped to tackle continuous change, BHRS has established a new Office of Improvement and Innovation. This office will expand upon existing BHRS efforts, such as employee wellness and engagement, data tracking and reporting and integrating trauma-informed approaches, and build new infrastructure and connections between these efforts and across BHRS networks.

Over the next year, one priority is to build our performance management system; this includes identifying key metrics that tell us about client outcomes and making sure staff have access to this information to be drivers of change. By focusing on improving our processes, integrating the client voice and supporting our staff in being successful, we will improve client outcomes. Let's learn together to make BHRS better, every day.

By Laura Shih, PhD. Laura is the Manager of the Office of Improvement and Innovation as of June 2024. She has been full time with BHRS since January 2024 and has been with San Mateo County Health since 2019, working with the LEAP Institute, Family Health Services and Public Health, Policy and Planning divisions.



CARE Court is Open July 1 in San Mateo County

CARE Court launches in San Mateo County on July 1, 2024, placing the County among the first in California to implement the program ahead of the December 2024 state-mandated deadline. Established by [Senate Bill 1338](#), the Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Act seeks to disrupt the revolving-door of homelessness, short-term psychiatric hospitalization and incarceration for those with untreated serious mental illness. The new civil court process will allow residents who are living with untreated psychotic disorders and are unable to survive safely in the community to receive community-based behavioral health services and support.

The program will connect eligible adults in mental health crisis to a CARE agreement or plan, which in collaboration with the client may include comprehensive treatment, housing and supportive services for one year with the possibility of up to a 12-month extension. The outpatient program is intended as an intervention for the most severely impaired residents, allowing them to remain in their community to stabilize, begin healing and exit homelessness in a less restrictive setting.

To be eligible for CARE Court, a person must meet all of these criteria:

- At least 18 years old
- A diagnosis of schizophrenia spectrum disorder or other psychotic disorder
- Not clinically stabilized in on-going voluntary treatment
- Unlikely to survive safely in the community, condition is deteriorating or in need of supports to prevent deterioration

Referrals for CARE Court are made by a petition process to the court. Eligible petitioners, such as a spouse or select family members, a client on their own behalf or a behavioral health or crisis response professional who has been treating or has had repeated interactions with a client, can complete the petition form either online via the [San Mateo Superior Court Self-Help Office](#) or in-person at the Hall of Justice, 400 County Center, 6th Floor, Redwood City. Visit the [How to File the CARE-100 Form](#) to check petitioner eligibility criteria and begin CARE act proceedings.

The BHRS CARE team can partner with clients and families to answer questions, support the petition process and help them towards recovery. To reach the CARE team, call 650-372-6125 or email CAREBHRS@smcgov.org. To read more about the CARE process in San Mateo County, [visit here](#). Additional support such as a Family Resource Guide, how to fill out a petition and training materials can be accessed via the CARE Act Resource Center at care-act.org.

By Ally Hoppis, Clinical Services Manager II. Contact Ally if you have questions about CARE Court or would like to request a presentation for your team.

For 59 Years, Residents Develop Expertise in Community Mental Health

The San Mateo County Psychiatry Residency, which started in 1965, is the first community psychiatry program in the nation. The program began with the goal of caring for our population with mental health needs, striving to provide them excellent care and helping them to live full lives in our community. For 59 years, our program has served as a model with its strong focus on social justice, trauma-informed care and health equity. We provide a structured training environment committed to outstanding comprehensive medication education with a rigorous focus on public psychiatry and helping our medical residents develop expertise in improving the overall health of all community members.

Each year, we receive applications for the next class in September. Last year we received more than 700 applications for four spots. We interview 50 students who bring with them an excellent academic record and a strong history of public service. We select applicants who have created innovative ways to care for underserved or marginalized populations, including those with substance-use issues, housing insecurity and justice-system involvement.

Residents spend four years with us, moving from a hospital-based first year with rotations at San Mateo Medical Center (SMMC), Kaiser and Stanford, into the behavioral health clinics and other partner hospitals for the next three years. Each July, as they progress through training, they gain more responsibility and learn how to manage patients with increasingly more complicated needs. 50 percent of our current county psychiatrists at SMMC or BHRS were trained in our own system, providing them an in-depth understanding of the local community and its needs and resources.

Residents are involved in daily care of patients and in creative community outreach. One resident started the first online mental health group in the county during COVID, and residents are developing a second iteration of a program that teaches patients both about the role of diet in mental health and cooking skills to help make better health choices available.

Residents have served in leadership roles in BHRS' Health Equity Initiatives, developed services such as Serenity House and helped address the overdose epidemic through evaluations of justice-involved patients with opioid use disorder.

By Brendan Scherer MD, Residency Program Director.



The 2024 residency graduates, Rennie Burke, Ketetha Olengue and Ashlee Roberson.



Keep up with the residency program on Instagram @sanmateopsychresidency

Kiku Crossing Welcomes Residents in Downtown San Mateo

Kiku Crossing Apartments, a new affordable housing development built by non-profit MidPen, opened its doors to residents April 2024. Kiku Crossing offers 225 apartment homes for families and individuals, nine of which are Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funded supported housing units for BHRS clients with a serious mental illness who are experiencing homelessness. Supportive housing is an evidence-based practice that enables individuals to live independently in affordable housing with a level of service that allows the person to maintain housing, obtain stability both in physical and mental health and participate in a supportive community.



Kiku Crossing also includes 13 formerly homeless households, eight units for individuals with intellectual disabilities and 57 units for public employees from the City of San Mateo. Kiku Crossing is centrally located in downtown San Mateo, close to transit, parks, shopping and one mile from the San Mateo Public Library. On-site amenities include a community room with kitchen, an outdoor courtyard and deck, BBQ, an after school program, play structure and bike storage.



MidPen offers on-site Resident Services to all residents, including resident engagement, assistance with accessing community resources such as in-home support services, financial planning courses, job readiness programs, counseling and case management services. Additional supportive housing services are provided to clients onsite by BHRS and their contracted providers. These services are based on the individual's goals and needs and can include independent living skills, crisis intervention, case management, supportive employment, housing retention skills, on-site community activities and more.

Kiku Crossing is the most recent of the MHSA projects which brings the total of MHSA funded housing units now to 71 units across multiple developments. BHRS continues to work with our community partners to support clients in the MHSA units so that they are successful in maintaining their housing.

By Kelsey Dattilo. Kelsey oversees the BHRS Housing and Supportive Services programs operations and convenes in cross-agency case consultations to support clients to remain housed in independent or supported housing. Questions about BHRS Housing programs can be directed to kdattilo@smcgov.org.