



County of Orange Behavioral Health Advisory Board

405 W. 5th Street
Santa Ana, CA 92701
TEL: (714) 834-5481
MHB Website:

<http://ochealthinfo.com/bhs/about/mhb>

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Doug Chaffee, Chairman
Fourth District

Katrina Foley, Vice Chairwoman
Fifth District

Janet Nguyen
First District

Vicente Sarmiento
Second District

Donald P. Wagner
Third District

Wednesday, August 26, 2026
10:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

Meeting Location:

601 N. Ross St., Santa Ana, CA 92701
Hybrid Option for members of the Public:

<https://zoom.us/j/95862491099>

Meeting ID: ID: 958 6249 1099

Call In: +1 301 715 8592

MINUTES

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BHAB MEMBERS

Alan V. Albright, LMFT
Chair

Linda Smith
Vice Chair

Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento
Second District

Adela Cruz

Cielo Echegoyen

Michell Fernandez

Stephen McNally

Frederick Williams

Cecilia Vega-Gonzalez

Chase Wickersham

Virginia Arvizu Sanchez

Members Present: Alan Albright, Frederick Williams, Linda Smith, Stephen McNally, Chase Wickersham, Cecilia Vega-Gonzalez, Adela Cruz, Frederick Williams, Virginia Arvizu

Members Absent: Supervisor Sarmiento, Cielo Echegoyen, Michelle Fernandez

Staff Present: Dr. Veronica Kelley, Karla Perez, Anthony Padilla, Gabriela Saldana, Annette Mugrditchian, George Varela, Vanessa Thomas, Ian Kemmer, Sophia Valdez, Brad Hutchins, Daniel Vu, Susan Kessel, Dawn Smith, Negar Doroudian, Sharon Ishikawa, Azahar Lopez, Jennifer Santillan, Erika Santillan, Uyen Stocker

Call to Order

Alan Albright

- The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. by Alan Albright who then led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes:

Linda Smith

- Fredrick Williams motions to approve July 22, 2026, General meeting minutes. Stephen McNally seconds the motion. Minutes approved (9 yes/ 0 No).

Behavioral Health Services Update:

- By: Dr. Veronica Kelley**

Dr. Veronica Kelley announced significant organizational changes effective August 28, 2026, which included service reductions, hiring freezes, and potential layoffs due to budget constraints. She outlined the county's legislative platform focusing on disaster preparedness, public safety, gun violence reduction, and behavioral health funding, emphasizing the importance of Board approval for any legislation. The discussion also covered the new 911 diversion process for mental health calls and updates on the Be well, with plans to transition services by December 31, 2026.



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HEALTH CARE AGENCY

Dr. Veronica Kelley, LCSW
Agency Director
Healthcare Agency

Karla Perez
Staff Specialist
Behavioral Health Services

Follow-Up Items:

1. Send the legislative platform to the BHAB once it is approved by the Board of Supervisors.
2. Share the dashboard on Behavioral Health Services and equity scorecard with the BHAB at the next meeting.

Procurement Process:

- By: Brittany Davis

Brittany Davis and her team from Procurement and Contract Services provided a comprehensive presentation. They covered contract policy manuals, RFA (Request for Applications) and RFP (Request for Proposal) processes, evaluation panel responsibilities, and threshold requirements for competitive solicitations.

They focused on contract policy and procurement processes for Behavioral Health Services. Brittany outlined key aspects of the Contract Policy Manual, including bidding thresholds of \$75,000 and Board of Supervisors (BOS) approval requirements for contracts over certain dollar amounts.

Daniel Vu explained the differences between RFAs and RFPs, noting that RFA's are used when the county's need exceeds available supply, while RFPs are used for requirements with undefined specifications and are evaluated based on scored criteria.

The discussion also covered the evaluation process for RFPs, including the role of subject matter expert panels and the final consensus meeting where scores are averaged and the highest ranked proposals are presented to the Board of Supervisors for approval.

Brittany explained the roles and responsibilities of evaluation panel members in the county's solicitation process, emphasizing on the importance of subject matter experts in ensuring fairness and transparency. She outlined the steps involved, including reading proposals, scoring individually, upholding timelines, and following procurement policies, while highlighting the value of panel participation in reinforcing integrity and providing insights into the solicitation process.

Follow-Up items:

1. Provide the list of sole contracts related to MHSA/BHSA that were of concern to the auditors and share status going forward from July 1.
2. Look into the possibility of providing the contract non-compliance report to the BHAB when it is submitted to the Board of Supervisors.



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Old Business:

Linda Smith

Workgroup Updates:

Cecilia Vega- The work group met, reviewed questions from the Data Notebook and planned to meet again on September 8th, 2026.

Linda Smith- Currently the BHAB does not have any members part of the nominating committee and encourage members to please email Karla Perez if they are interested.

New Business:

Alan Albright

No new business discussed.

Public Comment:

Alan Albright

Keith Torkelson:

Mr. Torkelson spoke about the importance of end-of-life planning, its benefits and its challenges.

Sherri:

Sherri is looking for the county to provide more accessible suicide prevention support and made the following recommendations:

1. Instead of saying “reach out for Help”, we should say, “reach out, and we will help you get connected to meaningful support.” Speaking up should start the process-our responsibility continues after.
2. Build a real bridge to care. When someone says they’re struggling, there must be a person or system that guides them through the next steps and stays involved until they are connected to appropriate care. A phone number or list of providers is not the same as receiving help.
3. Measure what happens after people ask for support. How long do they wait? How many never connect with a provider? How many are turned away due to insurance, cost or availability? Without tracking where people fall the cracks, we cannot claim the system is improving.

Announcements:

Linda Smith

Alan Albright recommended a four-part series of articles in The Orange County Register addressing methadone maintenance and the issues that surround the provision of its services as well as the receiving of those services. The article also talks about the experience in Orange County.

Chase Wickersham shared a growing concern regarding adults over 75 and the rise in emergency room visits related to high-potency marijuana and THC edibles. In the 1960s, marijuana typically contained 2-5% THC. Today, due to lack of regulation, many edible products can contain 60-70% THC. Older adults may take a gummy for pain relief without realizing it can take up to 25 minutes to take effect, leading them to take a second or even a third dose. This can result in dizziness, confusion, falls, and emergency room



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visits. These incidents have increased significantly in Orange County and across California. The most effective solution is education. We must ensure adults over 75 understand the potency of modern THC products and how to use them safely.

Cecila Vega expressed her appreciation and pride in seeing mental health resources displayed throughout Orange County. She noted that this effort helps make support more visible for the community.

Adjournment:

Alan Albright adjourned meeting at 11:45 am.

Officially submitted by: Karla Perez ** Note copies of all writings pertaining to items in these BHAB meetings are available for public review in the Behavioral Health Services Advisory Board Office, 405 W. 5th St., Santa Ana, CA 92701, 714.834.5481 or Email: OCBHAB@ochca.com **

2026 BHAB Attendance Record General Meetings													
MEMBER	28-Jan	25-Feb	25-Mar	22-Apr	27-May	24-Jun	22-Jul	26-Aug	23-Sep	28-Oct	25-Nov	23-Dec	
1. Alan Albright	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P					
2. Supervisor Sarmiento's Office	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A					
3. Stephen McNally	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P					
4. Cecilia Vega-Gonzalez	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P					
5. Linda Smith	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P					
6. Duan Tran	P	P	P	A									
7. Frederick Williams	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P					
8. Chase Wickersham	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P					
9. Michell Fernandez	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	A					
10. Adela Cruz	P	P	A	A	P	P	P	P					
11. Cielo Echegoyen		P	P	P	P	P	P	A					

Present: P

Absent: A