

A Successful Legislative Session and a Tribute to a Behavioral Health Legend

Greetings Colleagues!

The Month of September

This month is National Hispanic Heritage month. While Latinx populations have and continue to significantly contribute to the fabric of our nation, these communities are experiencing incredible trauma. As our nation grapples with the immigration crisis, it is important for to stay abreast of how decisions made at the federal level of government impact immigrant populations

Today, families are living in fear of being deported, and those who are arriving at our gates are being detained or turned away. In addition, federal actions are proving to further traumatize immigrant clients who are fearful of seeking behavioral health services. Specifically, the recent [Public Charge Rule](#) has deterred many from seeking treatment. Click here for a [resource list](#) which includes answers to [commonly asked questions](#) about the Public Charge Rule ([fact sheet](#), [additional Q & A](#)).

September is also recognized as National Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month. Suicide is the second cause for death among school aged populations. Suicide rates are much higher for some population segments such as American Indians/Alaska Natives and rising for others such as [young black males](#). Despite the mental stress from dealing with persistent racism, discrimination and exclusion, young people of color are half as likely than the general population to get the mental health care they need. Mental health services, social support, and connectedness are just a few of the approaches that can help prevent suicide.

Schools are natural catchment areas for youth, and CBHA has joined forces with Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation, County Behavioral Health Directors Association (CBHDA), and Children Now to promote a bill that would require teachers and other school personnel to receive training in mental and behavioral health. The goal is to assist school staff in recognizing the signs of distress, mental illness or a behavioral health malady and make timely and appropriate referrals.

We commend our member agencies who work tirelessly to combat the suicide epidemic in our state. Specifically, Didi Hirsch operates a multilingual 24/7 Crisis Line and text line that allows individuals to receive needed services. Click [here](#) for more information about Didi Hirsch's suicide intervention programs.

Legislative Update

The Workforce budget proposal for 70 million to fund the first two years of the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development's Five-Year Workforce Plan was successful. Ultimately, the Governor and Legislature approved 60 million for the Plan with a supplemental match provided by counties. CBHA will continue to work with our co-sponsors from the California Behavioral Health Planning Council and the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists to advocate for funding for the Plan.

Senate Bill 428 (Pan) is awaiting signature on Governor Newsom's desk! This bill requires California schools to implement behavioral health training programs such as Youth Mental Health First Aid. The bill has enjoyed bipartisan support and we will continue to work with the Department of Education and our co-sponsors including CBHDA, Children Now, and the Born This Way Foundation to advocate for the Governor's signature.

DHCS CEA Appointments

This week, DHCS announced new CEA appointments. The Department of Health Care Services did an internal departmental reorganization of the divisions and staff previously under Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Services (see DHCS [organization chart](#)). Behavioral Health now consists of two new divisions, Community Services Division and Licensing & Certification Division. In addition, the Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Division is a newly formed division under Health Care Programs and Local Governmental Financing (under which

Medi-Cal behavioral health financing policy will reside) under the Health Care Financing area of Health Care Programs.

The Department is announcing the following executive appointments to three of these newly formed divisions:

- Marlies Perez - Chief, Community Services Division (CSD)
- Janelle Ito-Orille - Chief, Licensing and Certification Division (LCD)
- Brenda Grealish - Chief, Medi-Cal Behavioral Health Division (MCBHD)

Master Plan on Aging Stakeholder Advisory Committee

This has been a busy week for the Governor's Master Plan on Aging Stakeholder Advisory Committee. On Monday, the SCAN Foundation held its annual conference and the MPA was the focal topic. Legislators, advocates and MPA SAC members joined together to discuss best practices for addressing the aging population of our state. On Tuesday, the initial 34-member SAC was convened by Secretary Ghaly and the synergy in the room confirmed that this group has the potential to create an innovative plan for California. I am excited about the opportunity to represent the perspective of behavioral health providers, and the clients they serve. I look forward to continued work with the SAC and will keep you apprised of our work.

Reflections About Rusty

I end this entry reflecting on the recent passing of Rusty Selix, CBHA's former Executive Director and Policy Director for decades. Rusty passed on August 27, 2019 and was surrounded by family. Rusty succumbed to complications related to his ALS diagnosis.

Rusty contributed to the fabric of California's mental health system- most notably, he was the lead author of Proposition 63, the Mental Health Services Act, and founded the California Access Coalition which resulted in adding long acting injectable medications to the state's drug formulary.

Consistent with his bold and strategic approach to making change in California's behavioral health system, Rusty fought until the end. Shortly after his ALS diagnosis, he began advocating for a cure. In fact, the last legislative hearing Rusty testified at was one that highlighted the need to find a cure for ALS. Rusty readily engaged in clinical trials and treatments to fight the disease. During his last years of life, he maintained contact with his Sacramento colleagues- sending periodic emails that outlined his vision for the behavioral health system and encouraging other seasoned and emerging leaders to pursue opportunities to strengthen the system.

Indeed, Rusty will be remembered and honored for all his contributions. Rusty's family has asked that in lieu of flowers or other tokens, donations be directed to [Mental Health America \(national association\)](#) or the [ALS Association \(Golden West Chapter\)](#).

Last, thank you to every organization who has worked collaboratively with CBHA on legislation and policy efforts this past year. It certainly takes village, and we appreciate the community that contributes to the work we do on behalf of providers who serve the lion share of behavioral health patients across the state.

In Service,
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