



NATHAN FLETCHER

SUPERVISOR, FOURTH DISTRICT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: December 13, 2022

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

ESTABLISH THE INTERFAITH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

In August 2022 the San Diego Workforce Partnership released a report titled “Addressing San Diego’s Behavioral Health Worker Shortage” which quantified the need to educate, train, recruit, employ, and retain an additional 18,500 behavioral health workers by 2027 to manage the growing need for behavioral health services.¹ This report outlines recommendations to meet that goal and highlights the need to create regional training centers that create a pipeline for new workers while meeting local needs. On October 11, 2022 (10), San Diego County (County) received the report with direction to implement the report’s recommendations with the overarching goal of investing in solutions to build the behavioral health workforce. One of the recommendations was to evaluate the feasibility and develop a plan to create regional behavioral health centers of excellence, which are multiple-purpose sites that serve the public and develop core competencies in training and supervision programs. A unique opportunity now exists to establish a pilot program with Interfaith Community Services (Interfaith), a local non-profit organization providing behavioral health services to individuals in need, and invest in solutions to build the behavioral health workforce.

The five-year pilot program is to be known as the Interfaith Behavioral Health Workforce Center of Excellence (COE). This program will provide training, education, and licensure to Interfaith’s existing and future workforce and enable them to advance in their careers, fill hard-to-recruit behavioral health positions, and develop a sustainable funding model to continue the pilot program beyond the grant term. It is my hope that this pilot program can help be a model for future COEs, and to particularly target communities disproportionately impacted by the behavioral health crisis.

The creation of this first pilot COE is just one step among many that the County will be taking to invest in our behavioral health workforce. Myriad strategies are needed in order to address issues

¹ [Addressing San Diego's behavioral workforce shortage - San Diego Workforce Partnership](#)

SUBJECT: ESTABLISH THE INTERFAITH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE (DISTRICTS: ALL)

around wages, recruitment, and retention. Ensuring our workforce is well-trained and prepared is just one of many steps we will be taking.

Approval of today's recommendations will leverage significant funding of \$2.5 million from the Price Philanthropies Foundation with \$1 million of the County of San Diego Mental Health Services Act funding to establish a five-year pilot program for Behavioral Health Workforce Center of Excellence managed by Interfaith Community Services.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)
CHAIR NATHAN FLETCHER**

1. Find that establishment of the pilot COE and the potential grant to administer the program do not constitute a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), because pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(3) and 15378(b)(4) and (b)(5) of the CEQA Guidelines, funding and administrative activities of government will not result in a direct or indirect physical change in the environment.
2. Pursuant to Government Code section 26227, find that the proposed Behavioral Health Workforce Center of Excellence program is necessary to meet the social needs of the County's population.
3. Authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, upon successful negotiations, to execute a grant agreement with Interfaith Community Services of up to \$1 million over a term of five years to administer the Behavioral Health Workforce Center of Excellence program, and to amend the grant agreement as necessary.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

We need a behavioral health workforce that reflects the diversity of the population it aims to serve and is culturally competent, linguistically diverse, and representative. Not only do we have a workforce shortage, but our workforce is not representative of our diverse communities. Cultural competency and humility are key components in most training programs, yet the workforce fails to represent the population it services either in language or cultural background. Regional training centers can be an accessible opportunity for a diverse population to enter the behavioral health workforce and provide connected care to historically underserved communities.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed action to advance efforts to recruit, train, and retain the local behavioral health workforce will contribute to goals in the behavioral health continuum of care to provide services in the communities where people live and reduce the need to travel long distances to find a care provider. Increasing the behavioral health workforce could result in positive social and economic enhancements, contributing to the overall sustainability of the region by providing a robust workforce that provides support for the most vulnerable of our community. Behavioral health workers provide many necessary services to our community that creates a healthier, stronger, and more resilient San Diego. Their dedication to the well-being of others provides positive social contributions to our communities and therefore, positive social sustainability for our region.

FISCAL IMPACT

SUBJECT: ESTABLISH THE INTERFAITH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE (DISTRICTS: ALL)

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-24 Operational Plan in the Health and Human Services Agency. If approved, today's recommendations will result in estimated costs and revenue of \$0.2 million in FY 2022-23 and \$0.2 million in FY 2023-24. Total cost for grant agreement with Interfaith Community Services is \$1.0 million over five years. The funding source is Mental Health Services Act. Funds for subsequent years will be incorporated into future operational plans. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

In August 2022, the San Diego Workforce Partnership released a report titled "Addressing San Diego's Behavioral Health Worker Shortage." The report quantified the need to educate, train, recruit, employ, and retain an additional 18,500 behavioral health workers by 2027 to manage the growing need for behavioral health services.² On October 11, 2022 (10), San Diego County (County) received the report with direction to implement its recommendations for growing the behavioral health workforce. One of the strategies presented in the report and recommendations in the board letter supported the creation of a broad, regional concept centered around developing core competencies in training and supervision programs to expand the region's behavioral health workforce infrastructure - referred to as regional training centers of excellence (COE).

COEs are an opportunity to build a pipeline for in-demand behavioral health jobs. COEs can also provide technical assistance and operational support to other community-based organizations to establish their own training programs, and provide applied research opportunities for innovations in service delivery, training efficacy, and workforce optimization.

Behavioral health training and education program coordinators have identified the lack of quality training sites as one of the primary obstacles to increasing the number of students and graduates in their programs.³ Through COEs, future and existing workers can be trained in real-world environments, supported through technical assistance, and can contribute to a culture of innovation. Recently, a unique opportunity was presented to establish a pilot of this strategy with a local community-based organization, Interfaith Community Services (Interfaith).

Interfaith, founded in 1979, is a comprehensive human services organization in North San Diego County. The organization administers more than 75 programs that provide immediate safety net services and long-term, wraparound supports to help people in crisis stabilize and rebuild their lives. Its programs are organized into six main areas: Housing, Short-Term Housing, Homeless Outreach and Shelter, Recovery and Wellness, Employment and Economic Development, and

² [Addressing San Diego's behavioral workforce shortage - San Diego Workforce Partnership](#)

³ Id.

SUBJECT: ESTABLISH THE INTERFAITH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE (DISTRICTS: ALL)

Supportive Services. With 2,830 volunteers and 220 staff, Interfaith serves nearly 22,000 people a year.

Programs administered by Interfaith play an important role in bridging the continuum of care from crisis management to coordinated care. Interfaith's Recuperative Care Center (RCC) provides short-term respite care to people with acute medical or psychiatric problems discharged from the hospital. The goal of the RCC is to stabilize clients' medical or mental health conditions and engage them in managing their care to reduce the overutilization of emergency departments, reduce hospital readmissions, and function independently. The RCC aligns with the County of San Diego's Behavioral Health Continuum of Care vision. On June 25, 2019 (15) the County entered into a partnership with Interfaith to build out this program to meet the growing needs of the community and bring essential services to North County.

Expansion of programs like the RCC will require increased staffing for those recently discharged from acute care. Establishing a COE at Interfaith can help build the talent pipeline for existing and future staff at the RCC and other core programs. Interfaith employs a growing, highly diverse workforce representing the communities it serves, of which 61 percent identified as Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color and 67 percent identified as women. Interfaith estimates that the COE will serve a total of 31,000 people over 5 years. The COE program can provide a new cohort of behavioral health workers that can staff step-down services and serve the larger regional behavioral health needs.

The Interfaith COE will advance a plurality of positions needed in the regional behavioral health workforce. The COE is expected to develop apprenticeships and on-the-job training for positions such as Psychiatric Technicians, Marriage and Family Therapists, Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors, Substance Abuse Counselors, Certified Nursing Assistants, Licensed Vocational Nurses, Registered Nurses in Behavioral Health, Peer Support Specialists, Occupational Therapists, and entry-level Social Workers. The COE will also develop scholarships and programs to enable trainees to be eligible for a Masters in Social Work.

The five-year pilot COE program will provide training, education, and licensure to the existing Interfaith workforce enabling them to advance in their careers and fill hard-to-recruit behavioral health positions. Once established, Interfaith is expected to develop a sustainable funding mechanism to continue operating the COE through a combination of Federal and State investments, grants, funding opportunities, Medi-Cal reimbursement, private insurance, and healthcare provider contracts. Interfaith needs seed funding to start up the COE and be afforded an opportunity to hire staff and create a sustainable program that justifies future revenue streams. The outcomes of this program should be analyzed and lessons learned from Interfaith should be incorporated into future COEs across the region.

The Price Philanthropies Foundation, a nonprofit corporation, will provide \$2.5 million of funding to support the implementation of the pilot program with Interfaith to fund and administer the Interfaith Behavioral Health Workforce Center of Excellence program. The County will also provide \$1 million of Mental Health Services Act funding over a term of five years, for up to \$200,000 annually, to support the effort. Implementing this transformative pilot program will

SUBJECT: ESTABLISH THE INTERFAITH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE (DISTRICTS: ALL)

operationalize the region’s ability to expand the size and diversity of the behavioral health workforce.

This COE is the first in a series of opportunities that may be replicated across the region and serve San Diego’s diverse populations. San Diego is home to many distinguished educational institutions, community-based organizations, and philanthropic entities that would be ideal candidates for future partnerships with this COE or the creation of new COEs. It is imperative that COEs be made accessible to all communities. COEs should be created across the region and Interfaith can serve as a model for future implementation.

The County has a duty to provide services to the San Diego community. The behavioral health crisis is growing and we lack the necessary workforce to meet the demand. Establishing a COE with Interfaith can build out a pipeline for behavioral health workers while providing services to those with unmet needs. I encourage you to support this board letter today.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today’s proposed actions supports the Equity Strategic Initiative of the County of San Diego’s 2022– 2027 Strategic Plan by supporting opportunities to create a behavioral health workforce that serves our community.

Respectfully submitted,



CHAIR NATHAN FLETCHER
Supervisor, Fourth District

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A