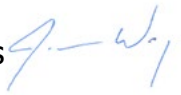


Memo

Date: May 1, 2024
To: All ACBH Employees, Team Members, & Stakeholders
From: James Wagner, Deputy Director of Clinical Operations 
Subject: NEW UPDATE - ACCESS Integration & Upcoming System Changes

I am pleased to make a very important announcement regarding how our department will operate its systemwide referral and admissions portal (also known as our “ACCESS” line). We believe it is critical for any organization to continually re-evaluate system needs. Therefore, we would like to provide an update on a decision that is aligned with the results of a formal assessment of our ACCESS division, community-driven need, our *True North Metric* of Quality, and a variety of statewide changes impacting behavioral health care.

As many are aware, California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) is a multi-year administrative initiative by the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to improve health outcomes for our Medi-Cal beneficiaries by creating efficiencies in how health care is delivered. These changes will improve access and service delivery and will thus allow Medi-Cal recipients to receive better care with less administrative barriers. One initiative under CalAIM is the ***Behavioral Health Integration 2027***. According to the DHCS website, the ***Behavioral Health Integration 2027*** “is requiring counties to combine the administration of Specialty Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder services into one, integrated specialty behavioral health program by no later than January 1, 2027” (<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Pages/BH-CalAIM-Webpage.aspx>). As a result of this statewide initiative, beginning in 2027, County behavioral health departments will transition from a two-plan (mental health and substance use system, operating as two distinct insurance plans) into a single plan contract for both mental health and substance use services. The aim of this change is to “improve health care outcomes and the experience of care for Medi-Cal members—particularly those living with co-occurring mental health and SUD issues—by reducing administrative burden for members, counties, providers, and the state.” (<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Pages/BH-CalAIM-Webpage.aspx>.)

As part of our preparation for the CalAIM Initiative ***Behavioral Health Integration 2027*** and beyond, our department will transition the operation of system access into an integrated approach. Currently, we have a separate access portal for mental health beneficiaries and a separate portal for substance use beneficiaries. Each portal has different phone numbers and is run by two separate organizations. In the spirit of ***Behavioral Health Integration 2027*** and system improvement, we are

planning for a full integration of system access to mental health and substance services through a single county-operated portal by July 2025. To ensure that Alameda County Behavioral Health Department (ACBHD) approaches this transition with the clients and families of our county in mind, we will procure specialized consultation to provide guidance through all the steps of this change process.

As we look ahead to this time of change, it is important to note that as a department we are incredibly appreciative of the support that the Center Point, Inc. organization has provided to the department for the operation of our SUD ACCESS portal since 2018. When ACBHD first opted into the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery system (also known as the “waiver”) that same year, Center Point served as a strong partner to the county and the community. I am pleased to also report that Center Point will work closely with ACBHD through this transition given our shared commitment to Alameda County’s beneficiaries.

As noted above, results from our department’s consultant-led evaluation of the operations of our ACCESS Division (Fall 2022) were also essential to identifying system capacity and other needed operational changes informed by local providers, stakeholders, and county employees. We continue to review operations and identify new ways in which to enhance our system; and are grateful to the county employees for their input and expertise.

As a valued stakeholder, we look forward to providing updates to you in the future, and most importantly, we look forward to seeking new ways in which to engage you in our departmental change process.

Thank you.