

# KAREN CAPECE



Since 2020 Karen Capece, LCSW has served as the Quality Management Program Director for Alameda County's Behavioral Health Department (BHD). In this role, Ms. Capece oversees the development of policies, procedures and compliance and also monitoring current regulations. Ms. Capece has the additional role of leading the annual Quality Improvement Workplan. Also in her role, Ms.Capece designs and oversees clinical program initiatives for quality outcomes that comply with accreditation and certification standards.

We honor you, Karen as a phenomenal woman in Behavioral Health!



*What motivated you to pursue a career in behavioral health?*

I identify as Chinese-American, first generation born in the United States and raised by immigrant parents and grandparents. I grew up with family members who experienced severe mental illness, one of whom had a premature death due to suicide. Another family member was a long time ACBHD client. Growing up I could see and feel the difference in how they were viewed and treated internal and external of the family, and the associated pain and suffering. As a child, I had a challenging time understanding this suffering. and the desire and passion to understand and help began. As an adult and mother, I continue to carry the fond memories of each of their uniqueness, kindness in heart and interactions with me, and keep me motivated and engaged in my behavioral health work.

*How has the behavioral health culture changed for women in the field during your time in the profession?*

Beginning my behavioral health career rendering direct client care, I saw predominately women. The high-level leadership roles were not necessarily held by a similar gender ratio. Over the past 20 years, I have seen major shifts to current, with increasing numbers of women in high-level leadership roles, to include greater cultural diversity with respect to race/ethnicity and age.

*Was there another woman/mentor/figure that inspired you in your work? If so, who was it and why did she inspire you?*

I have been fortunate to come across several inspiring women prior to and during my behavioral health career journey. With each woman, the common theme has been a strong and determined woman, in either formal or informal leadership roles, leading to improve individual and family lives. Each was also able to see and help grow something in me that has led to each evolutionary step in my behavioral health career.

*What impact have women had on behavioral health in the way we provide service?*

Women often serve various roles at home and work. As such, the female perspective and experience naturally lends to collectivist considerations and partnership collaborations. Therefore, I believe women have significantly contributed, and will continue to, in regards to multi-system coordinated whole person care.

*What changes have you seen in behavioral health because of women “shaking the table”?*

Empowerment. Empowerment for those who historically have felt unseen and unheard- to see and believe they matter, that they have a voice that can/should be heard, and that they “can.”

*The year is 2124. ACBHD leadership is opening a time capsule that was created and filled in 2024. What did you place in it?*

CalAIM, SmartCare

