

Sacramento County Mental Health Board Adult System of Care (ASOC) Meeting

**MINUTES – IN PERSON MEETING
HYBRID PARTICIPATION OPTION
Tuesday, February 4, 2025
6:30 PM – 8:00 PM**

Committee Member	Present	Absent
Brad Lueth (Vice Chair)	X	
Laura Bemis	X	
Mallika Walsh		X
Melinda Avey	X	
Patricia Wentzel (Chair)	X	

Agenda Item
<p>I. Welcome and Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Acknowledgement of Conduct Agreement • Announcements by MHB ASOC Committee Members <p>Chair Wentzel commenced the meeting at 6:30pm, introductions were made, and the Conduct Agreement was acknowledged.</p> <p><u>Announcements:</u></p> <p>Member Bemis reminded everyone about Journey of Hope, a collaborative art exhibit that pairs local artists and writers to share stories of hope and recovery, to give others insight, inspiration, understanding, strength, connection and raise awareness.</p> <p>Chair Wentzel informed everyone of the Mental Health Board meeting on February 5, 2025, from 6:00pm – 8:00pm. At this meeting, the board will be discussing the proposal to create a new Behavioral Health Commission.</p>
<p>II. Public Comments Relating to the Sacramento County Behavioral Health Services Adult System of Care – Items Not on Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No public comments were made.
<p>III. Discussion of new Sheriff’s Office policies regarding mental health calls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair Wentzel introduces the discussion on the new Sacramento County Sheriff’s office policy regarding mental health calls. • Chair Wentzel states that the Sacramento Sheriff’s office implemented a new policy based on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling from the Scott V. Smith case. The Scott V. Smith case involved an unarmed individual in mental distress that called the police for help. Officers used force to restrain him, although he complied with officers’ orders and was not suspected of a crime, and shortly after lost consciousness and was later pronounced dead. The court found that the use of force by the officer was deemed unreasonable given the call was non-criminal, ultimately removing qualified immunity for law enforcement officers in cases where no crime is committed. • Based on this ruling, the Sacramento Sheriff’s Office has implemented a policy that states that the Sheriff’s

office will no longer be taking mental health calls that do not have a criminal element. The Sheriff's Office will no longer be responding to welfare check requests or calls involving harm to self that include a weapon if they are not endangering others. There will also be no 5150's being issued unless a person is willing to go voluntarily.

- Chair Wenzel stated that 911 is redirecting calls to 988 (the suicide and crisis lifeline). 988 is attempting to provide support to callers and sending callers to the [Community Wellness Response Team](#) when applicable.
- Chair Wenzel claimed that other law enforcement agencies in the County have not adopted the same policy at this time.
- Member Avey asked if there were any negotiations between Sacramento County Behavioral Health and Sacramento County Board of Supervisors.
- Chair Wenzel responded that the Sheriff did not consult or coordinate with anyone else prior to making this policy announcement. Since the Sheriff is an elected position, the Board of Supervisors has no authority in the policies created by the Sheriff.
- Vice Chair Lueth asked if the new policy makes the Mobile Crisis Support Team ineffective since it was designed to have a law officer accompany staff on mental health calls.
- Chair Wenzel responded by saying there are two ways of responding to crisis calls in Sacramento County, the Community Wellness Response Team, which is a team of clinicians and peers that do not respond to calls where there is violence and the [Mobile Crisis Support Team](#) that consisted of a specialty trained officer/deputy and a mental health clinician. There were six Mobile Crisis Support Teams spread across the County and she is currently unaware of what these teams are doing in response to the updated policy.

IV. Presentation by Metro Fire on FD handling of mental health calls

- Jon Rudnicki introduced himself as the Assistant Chief for Sacramento Metro Fire (Metro Fire). Rudnicki also fills in as the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Chief.
- Rudnicki began the presentation by stating that the 911 system and the fire service pride themselves on service delivery with a mission to provide service primarily through the EMS lines by identifying the right resources for the right patient at the right time.
- Rudnicki provides history on Sacramento Metro Fire and states that Metro Fire responds to 911 calls in the county along with Sacramento City Fire Department, Consumnes Fire Department and Folsom Fire Department as the 911 providers in the county. Rudnicki stated that these fire departments meet regularly and collaborate and discuss issues similar to the Sheriff's office's new policy change on responding to mental health calls. Metro Fire has 20 ambulances that will respond to calls with and in the last three years, Metro Fire has piloted a new program called [Mobile Integrated Health](#). Mobile Integrated Health consists of two units that have a paramedic and an advanced provider (either a Physician Assistant or a Nurse Practitioner). This team responds to supplemental support from the 911 system and helps patients who have a minor need that doesn't require an emergency room. Patients are those who want help and are not on a hold.
- Rudnicki stated that Metro Fire does respond to 911 calls but how these calls work is that a fire dispatcher will take a call and if the situation involves violence or an unsafe environment, Metro Fire will wait until the scene is safe; historically made safe by law enforcement because they are trained more in these situations and then Metro Fire will step in and medically assist based on what is appropriate. Assistance can include talking a patient down, going to the emergency room, use of restraints or chemical sedation and or 5150 holds through law enforcement. These 5150 holds will no longer be available with the Sheriff's new policy.
- Rudnicki claimed that the biggest barrier in service is if Metro Fire can access patients safely. This barrier is currently being researched to find the best resources and solutions with other police departments across the state as well as Sacramento County Behavioral Health leadership.
- Rudnicki summaries that Metro Fire is responding to mental health calls where they can gain access to patients safely. Rudnicki states that how Metro Fire adjusts to the Sheriff's policy change is a top priority and are looking for ways to support the community and

Member Comments/Questions:

Vice Chair Leuth:

Q: Does Metro Fire only act when a patient goes voluntarily and does Metro Fire have any authority on placing people on holds?

A: Metro Fire cannot put individuals on a hold. If a person is noncompliant and access cannot be made safely,

then this is a barrier to support.

Chair Wenzel:

Q: How do 911 calls get directed to Metro Fire?

A: When you call 911, it directs you to a law enforcement dispatch center and the dispatcher will determine if the call should be directed to law enforcement or fire department. When calls are transferred to fire, Metro Fire receives notification from a joint dispatch center with all fire departments in the county. If there is violence, weapons or a mental health crisis, EMS and law enforcement are both dispatched.

Q: Does 988 direct calls to Metro Fire?

A: If there is a medical emergency and the call is not one under the purview of 988, yes.

Q: Does Metro Fire coordinate calls with the Community Wellness Response Team?

A: The Mobile Integrated Health team has had more integration with the [Co-Response Crisis Intervention Team](#) (CCIT). There are relationships and collaboration on mental health calls primarily on call when a medical clearance is needed.

Q: Can you provide more information on chemical sedation and provide examples for when chemical sedation might be used?

A: Fortunately, chemical sedation is used infrequently. Per protocol, Metro Fire is allowed to administer chemical sedation in the field for transporting and access patients safely. Without law enforcement support, the frequency is anticipated to be lower.

Member Bemis:

Q: Will you be able to provide an update as Metro Fire is updated on new policies?

A: We are happy to collaborate and share updates, but updates might be more spaced out.

V. Public Comment regarding Change in Sheriff's Offices Policies

• **Wade Brynelson**

- Wade introduced himself and Nancy Brynelson as co-chairs for the Family Advocates for Individuals with Mental Illness in Sacramento County. Wade said that 11 members met to discuss the policy change with the Sheriff's office. The group made the following recommendations:
 - Hold hearings to discuss the policy change with concerned citizens and leadership from county agencies.
 - Funding for Mobile Crisis Support Team and Community Wellness Response Teams is inadequate to perform the services that the Sheriff's office will no longer perform. Therefore, it is recommended that the funding needed should be transferred from the Sheriff's office to support these teams.
 - Transfer funding from the Sheriff's office to any additional staff and cost needed to implement the recent legislation through SB43, CARE Court and Assisted Outpatient Treatment.
 - Review the dispatch systems for 911, 988 and Community Wellness Response Teams so they can be better coordinated and more efficient.
 - Officer training and supervision be strengthened to ensure that unreasonable force is never asserted in the community, in jails or with those with mental illnesses.

• **Nancy Brynelson**

- Nancy thanked and expressed appreciation of the Sacramento Metro Fire Department for their client-centered services.
- Based on personal experiences, Nancy vocalizes that law enforcements involvement with those experiencing a mental health crisis is critically important. Nancy stated that when a loved one is experiencing a mental health crisis, the whole family is experiencing mental health crisis, and the entire family needs to be kept safe.
- Nancy recognized that the Adult System of Care committee and Metro Fire have no authority in the Sheriff's decision but encouraged the County prioritize this issue to see how there can better coordinate care across all systems.

• **Diana Burdick**

- Diana wanted to clarify if other law enforcement agencies are implementing the same policy as the Sheriff because when talking to the Rancho Cordova Fire Department, it was mentioned that the Rancho

Cordova police department will be implementing the Sheriff's policy for responding to mental health calls. Diana wants the city to know what the public opinion on this issue is.

- Chair Wenzel clarified that the city of Rancho Cordova is operated through the Sheriff's office so the new policy applies to Rancho Cordova law enforcement.
- Diana repeated Wade's sentiment that if the Sheriff's office will no longer take mental health calls, then funding should be redirected to services that will.
- Diana provided a personal story in how Sacramento Metro provided services to her and her family and expressed how the service was appreciated.
- Diana concluded by stating that while at the Sheriff's office's press conference earlier that day, the sheriff announced that law enforcement officers are not trained to handle mental health calls.

- **Jan Whiteside**

- Jan stated that prior to this meeting, Sheriff Cooper was on channel 3 news and made a statement saying that they are not trained in mental health or de-escalation techniques. Jan found this to be an area of concern with the Sheriff's office.

VI. Adjournment

- Next Meeting will be March 4, 2025, from 6:00pm- 7:30pm
- Chair Wenzel adjourned the meeting at 7:37pm