



KINGS COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Lisa D. Lewis, PhD
Behavioral Health Director

KINGS COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD

Codi Pennington, Chair
Wendy Osikafo, Board Member
Debra Allen, Board Member
Michelle Allen, Board Member
Michael Dey, Board Member

Ken Baird, Vice Chair
Joe Neves, Board Member
Stephanie Huddleston, Board Member
Leana Cantrell Board Member
Vacant, Board Member

In compliance with the American Disabilities Act, if you require a modification or accommodation to participate in this meeting, including the availability of assistive listening devices or agendas in alternative formats, please contact the Kings County Behavioral Health Office at (559) 852-2444 at least 48 hours prior to the start of this meeting.

Regular Meeting Minutes

February 23, 2026 @ 12:00 p.m.

Kings County Behavioral Health

Meeting via Microsoft Teams (invite below) and in person

1222 W. Lacey Blvd, Hope Conference Room
Hanford, CA 93230

Call to Order & Welcome

Vice Chairperson Codi Pennington called the Meeting of the Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB) to order, and Mary Jewell BHAB Secretary with Kings County Behavioral Health (KCBH), completed roll call of members.

Board Members Present

Codi Pennington, Ken Baird, Joe Neves, Monica Conner in for Wendy Osikafo, Debra Allen, Stephanie Huddleston, Leana Cantrell and Michael Dey (arrived after roll call)

Members Absent

Michelle Allen

Others Present

Christi Lupkes, Lisa Lewis, Oliver Moreno, Kathlene Barragan, Brett Woolman, Alex C. Walker, Polo Ortiz, and Mary Jewell.

Review & Modification to Agenda

Modification to the last minutes to reflect Codi Pennington was absent and did not comment on the Opportunity for Public Comment.

Opportunity for Public Comment

Chairperson Codi Pennington read the public comment instructions and opened the floor for any public comments. No public comments were given.

Consent Calendar

Approval of Minutes: January 26, 2026 Behavioral Health Advisory Board Regular meeting. Motion given first by Ken Baird and second by Debra Allen with the above changes.



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Action Items

None

Informational Agenda Items

Grievance and Appeals Process

Oliver Moreno and Christi Lupkes

Oliver Moreno briefly introduced himself to the Board. He has been with Kings County for about 2 years. He started at Human Services and moved to Behavioral Health as the Patient Rights Advocate.

The purpose of this presentation is to inform you what the inform clients of their rights and appeal process. The PRA also provides resources to the clients to ensure timely access to treatment and and services

The PRA responsibility is to ensure compliance with mental health and substance use disorder program regulations. Conduct on site audits to ensure policies, forms and documentation is current. I also advise our providers with training and resources.

The goal of the PRA is help the client express their concerns and provide information so the patient can make informed decisions. The PRA will give the client different options but not make the decision for them. The will also answer questions and provide assistance to any provider KCBH contracts with regarding state and federal non discrimination legal obligations.

The PRA will investigate and process grievances received related to American with Disability Act, Affordable Care Act and Rehabilitation Act. Part of the process is making sure the client is getting the right services and treatment information for their progress and treatment. Services provided should be in a sage environment and they have the right to discuss or report any concerns they may have with their service provider.

Clients also have the right to authorize another person to be their authorized representative. You mostly see this with people who suffer from some type of mental health disorder.

Who can file a grievance? Clients who are currently receiving treatment from a KCBH provider, they can also authorize another person to represent them. They will be notified throughout the grievance process. Client or their representative can phone, mail, mail, fax or in person their grievance.

Most of the grievances Oliver receives are from clients reporting that a staff member is being rude, they are not listening to my concerns. Once the grievance is received it is then documented and a letter of acknowledgement will be sent within 5 days. The grievance is then reviewed and investigated and we have 30 days to respond..

If a client is not satisfied with a decision affecting their services-such as denial, reduction of their services or termination of services, they have the right to file an appeal.



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Christi Lupkes will go over the appeals.

Appeals are typically handled by the Quality Assurance Clinician who are assigned to both Mental Health Plan and the Substance Use Disorder services. When a determination is made that impacts services, the client receives a Notice of Adverse Benefit Determination (NOAB). Which will outline the decision and provide instruction on how to file an appeal.

The appeal process ensures that decisions are reviewed by a clinician of equal or higher licensure. During this process, additional information may be gathered through chart reviews or direct communication with the client and the provider. In some cases, new information provided by the client may result in the original decision being overturned.

Clients have 60 calendar days from the date of the NOAB to file an appeal. Once an appeal is received, an acknowledgment letter is sent within five calendar days. The appeal is then reviewed, and a determination is made within the required timeframe. Expedited appeals may be processed when there is an immediate risk to the client's health or well-being.

Christi emphasized that clients are included throughout the appeal process and that no punitive action is taken against individuals who choose to file an appeal.

If a client is not satisfied with the outcome of the local appeal process, they have the option to request a State Fair Hearing through the California Department of Health Care Services.

During a State Fair Hearing, the case is reviewed at the state level. The QA clinician is responsible for conducting a full case review, gathering documentation, and preparing a position statement outlining the rationale for the original decision. This process requires thorough documentation and coordination with the original provider.

State Fair Hearings are not common; however, they serve as an additional safeguard to ensure that decisions are fair and appropriate. Mr. Moreno noted that while these hearings require significant preparation, they help ensure transparency and accountability in the decision-making process.

It is very important of proper documentation and tracking of all grievances and appeals. All cases are logged and maintained for auditing purposes, and reports are submitted regularly to ensure compliance with state requirements.

Additionally, Behavioral Health conducts routine monitoring activities, including test calls to access lines, to ensure that clients are receiving accurate information regarding services, grievances, and appeals.



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Brett went over the Behavioral Health Retreat ideas. The biggest part is finding a date that works for everyone. The first half would be education getting our bearings the second half could be what are goals and priorities. The Board decided to schedule the Retreat to April 27, 2025 from 10 to 2.

Some of the topics we can go over is do we want to recruit for membership, doing site visits, what topics do we want to discuss in the year ahead. Last year the board focused on the By-Laws and that's something we can look into every couple of years or create an ad hoc group.

Staff Report

Lisa D. Lewis, Ph.D., KCBH

Dr. Lewis let the Staff know that she will be going out on leave and Christi will be acting director while she is out. Dr. Lewis also said when she returns in May she will be retiring from the county. So there will be a recruitment going out very soon.

Advisory Board Member Comments

Micheal Dey reported out on the Point in Time for the unhoused population in Kings County. These numbers don't typically come back till April or May.

Oak Wellness Center Update

Oak Wellness had a Valentine get together and shared soup and mingled. Debra will try to bring one item to the board each month of the crafts they are doing at the center.

Future Agenda Items & Next Meeting

- Approval of Meeting Minutes from February 23, 2026 Behavioral Health Advisory Board Meeting
- Next Regular Meeting Date: April 27, 2026
- **Adjourned at 1:20 PM**