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Santa Barbara
County



September 19, 2021

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

Honorable Supervisors,

This upcoming Tuesday, September 21st, Behavioral Wellness will present a "capital needs" report update to the county Board of Supervisors.

The report highlights impressive progress in gradually increasing the number of beds at different levels of the mental health continuum of care, including supportive housing, residential treatment beds for substance use disorders, and in-county beds for persons on mental health conservatorship. Behavioral Wellness and the County have much to be proud of in this report.

Nevertheless, the county continues to experience a growing inpatient bed crisis, as evidenced by the number of persons in acute crisis visiting our emergency rooms, and released without treatment when inpatient beds are not secured for them. As in 2016, Santa Barbara County has just 16 inpatient psychiatric beds at the Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF) to serve a population of 447,000, whereas the commonly cited need for acute care inpatient beds is 10 beds per 100,000 population. The first step in addressing this bed crisis is to acknowledge the need based upon data in hand. We in NAMI Santa Barbara County urge Behavioral Wellness and the County to prioritize this focus. We have a common interest with community hospital users, persons with the most serious mental illness, and their families, in addressing the inpatient bed crisis.

Respectfully,

Lynne Gibbs, Chair, NAMI Santa Barbara County Public Policy Committee