



Sheila de la Guerra *Public Comment*

From: Lynne Gibbs <gibbslyn2@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, April 11, 2026 1:22 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: NAMI Statement for Budget Workshop Presentations: Sheriff's Dept. and Behavioral Wellness
Attachments: BOS Letter 2026 04 11.docx

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Please see attached NAMI Santa Barbara County's statement for Sheriff's Dept. and Wellness presentations.

Thank you,
Lynne Gibbs, on behalf of Tom Franklin, NAMI SBCO President



To: Chair Nelson and Supervisors
From: NAMI Santa Barbara County
Subject: Recommendations on Co-Response, CIT, and the Sheriff's Behavioral Sciences Unit
Date: April 11, 2026

On behalf of NAMI Santa Barbara County and the hundreds of families we serve, I want to thank you for the time, understanding and commitment to improving the lives of the thousands of our citizens living with serious mental health conditions, especially during this most difficult time in annual budget planning. Under your leadership, the Behavioral Wellness and Sheriff's departments, along with the CEO's office, created an interim plan which would allow one of the most valuable county services, Mental Health Crisis Co-Response Program to continue through the upcoming fiscal year.

As departmental budget hearings get underway, we ask you to consider taking a number of steps during the upcoming budget discussions which are essential to maintaining the positive momentum of the past several years in our mental health crisis response.

1. Give your support to the planned funding of 3 Co-Response teams for which funding sources have been identified. We also support the recommended additional tasks to be assigned to all 4 teams that has been developed and agreed upon by Behavioral Wellness and Sheriff Depts. These tasks would be performed as time permits and use Co Response teams in several situations in county jails including crisis response at booking, while in custody and linkage to services at discharge.
2. Opt to restore the 4th team's deputy position for the coming fiscal year. Our understanding is that Behavioral Wellness could provide the clinician for this team within their budget. This team is essential to ensure equitable balance and reach of the program across the county.
3. Assign the Sheriff Dept. and Behavioral Wellness Dept., perhaps with guidance from CEO's office, the task of accurately measuring work loads of all parts of the crisis response system by July 1, Then using that information to develop a sustainable crisis response system that serves the needs of both high risk and low risk calls for crisis services within current budget constraints. The number of co-response teams should be adequate to handle most of the 'high risk' calls for service (those in which callers describe potential violence, serious threats, and/or possible presence of weapons) while low risk calls (when violence threats or weapons can be ruled out) might be handled initially without law enforcement. Since the Mobile Crisis Benefit waiver will expire on March 31, 2027, and counties will then need to fund locally to continue the program, it

would also be prudent to consider whether continuing that program would be cost effective considering the substantial reduction in MediCal reimbursement which will occur.

It is also essential that our county mental health crisis response system include adequate training and support resources to ensure our crisis response maintains the enviable results achieved over the past 8 years since the advent of Co-Response. Our county's reputation for "low use of force" among law enforcement—including the Sheriff's Department, city police, Highway Patrol, and probation officers—is largely due to the Crisis Intervention Team 40-hour Training Academy. This is largely the foundation of the culture of de-escalation which has earned us this recognition and is the DNA of Mental Health Co-Response teams.

A second pillar of our reputation is the position of Manager of Behavioral Health Services Unit within the Sheriff's department. This position critically leverages the engagement of deputies and has overall responsibility for the 40 hour CIT training. It also has proven remarkably effective in helping to establish and perpetuate a "culture" of de-escalation and avoidance of use of force whenever possible. The fact that there is a clinician in that position who is "one of their own" makes deputies much more receptive to learning and using de-escalation techniques. It also provides an invaluable linkage to other clinicians in jail mental health, BWell, Crestwood (which handles after hours crisis response), and other local entities. Other crucial duties include: engagement in crisis negotiation callouts and supporting deputy mental health. The incumbent has secured about \$5 million in grant funding during her tenure including 2 Co-Response grants, funding for the jail Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) program as well as funding for other mental health services.

Because we believe both CIT program and the BHU are critical components of our crisis response system going forward, we ask that you consider:

1. Take steps to ensure the 40-hour nationally recognized CIT training be part of our crisis response system going forward.
2. Restore the BHU Manager position in Sheriff's Dept. budget

In Summary, together over the past 8 years in our county, we've built a mental health crisis response system for high risk situations which has not only reduced incarceration and increased linkage to needed services by using deescalation techniques, but also has helped create and reinforce a "culture" of avoidance of use of force whenever possible. This includes not just crisis responses by county deputies but by other law enforcement agencies in our county. This program has kept our citizens with serious mental health conditions, their families, county staff, and our communities as a whole safe, helped avoid catastrophic outcomes, and reduced county exposure. We appreciate your consideration of these requests to ensure the continuation of this most valuable program.