



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER**

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Submitted on:
(COB Stamp)

Department Name: Behavioral Wellness
Department No.: 043
Agenda Date: April 7, 2026
Placement: Administrative Agenda
Estimated Time: N/A
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Director: Antonette Navarro, LMFT, Director
Department of Behavioral Wellness

Contact: Laura Zeitz, RN, Assistant Director Inpatient, Crisis,
Long Term Care, Justice and Housing
Department of Behavioral Wellness

SUBJECT: Services Agreement with Traditions Psychiatry Group, P.C. dba Traditions
Behavioral Health for Psychiatrist Staffing Services for Fiscal Year 2025–28

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: Risk Management

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Approve and authorize the Chair to execute an Agreement for Services of Independent Contractor with Traditions Psychiatry Group, P.C. dba Traditions Behavioral Health (not a local vendor) to provide locum tenens psychiatry staffing services at Behavioral Wellness Psychiatric Health Facility for a total maximum contract amount not to exceed \$4,342,524, inclusive of \$858,790 in fiscal year (FY) 2025-26, \$1,728,314 in FY 2026-27, \$1,755,420 in FY 2027-28, and contract term from the date executed by County through June 30, 2028;
- b) Delegate authority to the Director of the Department of Behavioral Wellness or designee to suspend services as provided in Section 20 of the Agreement, make immaterial changes to the Agreement as provided in Section 26 of the Agreement, agree on alternative experience requirements for Professionals as provided in Exhibit A, Section 4.C, and adjust shift hours as provided in Section 5 of Exhibit A-2 of the Agreement, without altering the total maximum contract amount and without requiring the Board of Supervisors' approval of an amendment of the Agreement, subject to the Board of Supervisors' ability to rescind this delegated authority at any time; and

- c) Determine that the above-recommended actions are not a project that is subject to environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(4), finding that the actions are governmental funding mechanisms and/or fiscal activities that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

Summary Text:

This item is on the agenda to request that the Board of Supervisors approve and authorize the Chair to execute an agreement for services with Traditions Psychiatry Group, P.C., dba Traditions Behavioral Health (TBH) for the placement of highly qualified locum tenens temporary psychiatrists in the Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF), during Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-26 through fiscal year 2027-28. TBH is a psychiatrist staffing service used to help address Behavioral Wellness psychiatrist staffing shortages. Approval of these actions will allow Behavioral Wellness to access contracted psychiatric personnel to cover necessary services at the PHF.

Discussion:

Despite ongoing open recruitment for psychiatrists, the Department of Behavioral Wellness (BWell) has experienced challenges in attracting and retaining qualified psychiatrists for its facilities. Contracting temporary psychiatrists is a necessary, time-limited strategy to ensure the County meets Network Adequacy Requirements as mandated by the California Department of Health Care Services and maintains timely access to behavioral health services for our members and clients. Ongoing recruitment and retention challenges have created coverage gaps that cannot be resolved quickly through permanent hiring alone. Temporary psychiatrists allow the County to stabilize services, reduce wait-times, and prevent service disruptions while the department pursues long-term workforce solutions. This approach supports patient care, assists existing staff, and ensures compliance with regulatory and contractual obligations. This strategy has helped BWell meet network adequacy standards.

TBH psychiatrists provide mandated psychiatric services, including diagnostic and medication evaluations; prescribing psychiatric medications; reviewing, revising, and approving client assessments; and participation in the development, review, revision, and approval of client treatment plans. Additionally, TBH provides a unique locum tenens inpatient team that works longer shifts, weekends, holidays, and evenings as required at the PHF.

BWell requests approval from the Board of Supervisors for this Agreement to allow BWell to task TBH to provide professionals who can provide mandated and critically needed psychiatry services at the PHF.

Background:

BWell provides a continuum of mental health services to Santa Barbara County residents. Part of the continuum of care is the Santa Barbara County PHF, located on Calle Real in Santa Barbara.

The PHF is a 16-bed, locked inpatient psychiatric facility that provides 24-hour acute, comprehensive care to individuals with severe mental illness who require psychiatric hospitalization under Welfare and Instructions Code (WIC) Section 5150. The facility is designated as a Lanterman-Petris-Short (LPS) facility and is licensed by the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) as a "psychiatric health facility." The PHF is also eligible to participate as a hospital in the federal Medicare program under Health and Safety Code section 1250.2(d) provided all federal participation requirements are met. The County PHF is licensed to only serve adult clients (ages 18 and over) and is financially supported through Medi-Cal and Medicare reimbursement.

TBH provides locum tenens temporary staffing by placing highly qualified psychiatrists. Despite continuous open recruitment for psychiatrists, BWell has experienced challenges attracting and retaining qualified psychiatrists to work at its facilities. During the continuous recruitment from January 30, 2023 – February 3, 2025, we received 29 applications, of which 18 applicants met minimum qualifications. Based on the information in NeoGov, 6 of those qualified applicants were hired. A second continuous recruitment was opened on March 12, 2025. That recruitment yielded 4 qualified applicants, and 1 candidate was extended an offer. Within the last 3 years, we have hired 7 candidates, of which 5 have separated as of January 2026 (for different reasons). Additionally, TBH provides a specialized locum tenens inpatient team that works extended shifts, weekends, holidays, and evenings as required at the PHF.

Santa Barbara County contracted with TBH from FY 2013-14 through FY 2023-24. For FY 24-25, the demand at the PHF did not warrant a sixteen-hour day for the assigned TBH psychiatrist and TBH and the County could not align on the reduced hours, and therefore no contract was executed. Staffing needs at the PHF have since changed, and there is again an urgent need for the psychiatrist locum tenens staff that TBH provides.

Performance Measures:

At the PHF Behavioral Wellness tracks Quality Care Management (QCM) metrics including readmissions, length of stay, and incident reports.

Other tracked metrics include:

- Patient satisfaction with care
- Timely entry of notes.
- Completion of discharge summaries within state requirements.
- Appropriate scrutiny of potential admissions for medical necessity.
- Minimization of patient stays under administrative status.

The Pharmacist at the PHF monitors use of polypharmacy. The PHF Governing Board and their oversight group tracks metrics about practice patterns and outcomes, as well as professional comportment. All above monitoring and metrics assist in overall oversight.

Contract Renewals:

During the most recent contract with TBH, in FY 2023-24, BWell was satisfied with TBH's performance in providing four (4) psychiatrists. TBH was able to locate and provide candidates that met unit needs regarding timeliness, clinical outcomes, and training. The psychiatrists delivered care in accordance with generally accepted clinical practices and BWell standards, participated in medical staff meetings and peer review discussions and responded appropriately to communications and clinical feedback.

Fiscal Impact:

Funding for the proposed locum tenens services will come from Medi-Cal (Federal) and Realignment (State) sources.

Sufficient appropriations were included in the FY 25-26 Adopted Budget within Salary Savings budget. Expenditures will be reassessed at the end of the current fiscal year and submit budget revisions at that time along with any other budgetary request. This will provide a more efficient and cost-saving process for the County.

Future fiscal year funding will be included in the department's requested budget, subject to Board approval. There is no additional cost to the General Fund.

Fiscal Analysis:

| Funding Source | FY 2025-26 | FY 2026-27 | FY 2027-28 | Total |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Federal | \$429,395 | \$864,157 | \$877,710 | \$2,171,262 |
| State | \$429,395 | \$864,157 | \$877,710 | \$2,171,262 |
| Total | \$858,790 | \$1,728,314 | \$1,755,420 | \$4,342,524 |

Special Instructions:

Please email one (1) complete, executed copy of the above Agreement and one (1) Minute Order to cshorb@sbcbswell.org and to bwellcontractsstaff@sbcbswell.org.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Traditions Behavioral Health FY 2025-28

Authored by:

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