



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: May 5, 2026
Placement: Administrative Agenda
Estimated Time: N/A
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from: N/A
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Director: Antonette Navarro, LMFT, Director, Behavioral Wellness
Contact: Melissa Wilkins, MPH, CADC-II, CCPS, Branch Chief of Alcohol and Drug Programs, Behavioral Wellness
Joshua Woody, LMFT, Branch Chief of Quality Management, Behavioral Wellness
SUBJECT: American Indian Health and Services, Inc. Memorandums for Understanding for Traditional Health Care Practices Benefit Implementation for Fiscal Years 2024-2027

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: Risk Management

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Approve, ratify, and authorize the Chair to execute the Memorandum of Understanding with American Indian Health and Services, Inc., an Urban Indian Health Program, for the provision of traditional health care practices to tribal members eligible for Medi-Cal for a total maximum contract amount not to exceed \$89,300, inclusive of \$5,800 for FY 2024-25, \$41,400 for FY 2025-26 and \$42,100 for FY 2026-27, for the period of May 12, 2025 through December 31, 2026;
- b) Delegate to the Director of the Department of Behavioral Wellness or designee the authority to suspend, delay, or interrupt services and adjust service rates without increasing the contract maximum under the Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) per Section 19 and Section 25 of the MOU, and Exhibit B, Section I.B of the MOU, without requiring Board of Supervisors' approval of an amendment to the MOU, 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 approval of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with American Indian Health And Services, Inc. for the provision of Traditional Health Care Practices by Traditional Healers and/or Natural Helpers for eligible Medi-Cal members to support prevention, early intervention, and/or services for Tribal Members (American Indian/Alaska Natives) with or at-risk of Substance Use Disorder (SUD) for fiscal year (FY) 2024-25 through 2026-27. BWell's role is to process payments for services rendered. The American Indian Health and Services, Inc. MOU for Traditional Health Care Practices totals \$89,300 for the term of FY 2024-27.

Discussion:

To be in compliance with Behavioral Health Information Notice (BHIN) 25-036, Behavioral Wellness (BWell) has been actively working with American Indian Health and Services, Inc. (AIHS) to support the implementation and provision of Traditional Health Care Practices with Traditional Healers and Natural Helpers for American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) members eligible to receive covered services through the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS). As this program is designed by the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), this treatment is solely managed and overseen by Indian Health Service (IHS) facilities, facilities operated by Tribes or Tribal organizations (Tribal Facilities) subject only to State and Federal oversight; BWell's role is to submit Drug Medi-Cal claims for Traditional Health Care Practices on behalf of AIHS, and process payments. Therefore, AIHS will enter service delivery into BWell's billing system and BWell will, on behalf of AIHS, bill Medi-Cal accordingly and reimburse AIHS. AIHS is responsible for ensuring the satisfactory level of service for Tribal Members and its effectiveness. There are no reporting requirements to the County by AIHS per the State issued BHIN.

Background:

American Indian Health and Services, Inc. (AIHS) provides health care services for AI/AN members, and community patients. AI/AN members are eligible for programs supported by the Indian Health Services, including Behavioral Health Services and Alcohol and Substance Use Services.

On October 28, 2025, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) issued BHIN 25-036 requiring DMC-ODS counties to provide coverage for Traditional Health Care Practices through approved Indian Health Care Providers (IHCPs) for members with SUDs from the effective date, March 21, 2025, through December 31, 2026. Traditional Health Care Practices are expected to improve access to culturally responsive care; support Indian Health Services facilities' operated by Tribes or Tribal organizations under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act; support these facilities' ability to serve their patients; maintain and sustain health; improve health outcomes and the quality and experience of care; and reduce existing disparities in access to care.

Traditional Health Care Practices included in this BHIN identified two new service types, Natural Helper and Traditional Healer services. Traditional Healer services may use an array of interventions including music therapy (such as traditional music and songs, dancing, drumming), spirituality (such as ceremonies, rituals, herbal remedies) and other integrative approaches. Natural Helper services may assist with navigational support, psychosocial skill building, self-management, and trauma support to individuals that restore the health of eligible Medi-Cal members.

The IHCP providers are required to coordinate with the County to ensure members have access to comprehensive American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) assessments to identify other SUD treatment needs, to ensure Tribal Members have access to medications for addiction treatment (MAT) services; and to implement at least two of the evidenced-based treatment practices (motivational interviewing, cognitive behavioral therapy, relapse prevention, trauma-informed treatment, or psycho-education, storytelling, talking circles, sweat lodge and ceremonial practices). IHCP’s seeking to provide these services were required to opt-in through the submission of an application package to DHCS for their approval.

AIHS submitted its opt-in package to DHCS and was approved to provide the new Traditional Health Care Practices effective March 12, 2025. Once AIHS was approved, it was permitted to immediately begin offering Traditional Health Care Practices to its Tribal Members. Billing for these services must occur through Behavioral Wellness’ Electronic Health Record system within 90 days from the end of the month in which services were provided. BWell has been working closely with AIHS to establish this MOU to support these programs and members. BWell is also actively working to provide ongoing support for members who seek additional treatment and services options through County DMC-ODS providers.

Approval of this MOU will provide the avenue to reimburse AIHS for services provided to its members for the term of the MOU and will ensure the additional BWell services and culturally responsive care is offered and provided to American Indian and Alaskan Native members.

Fiscal Analysis:

The above-referenced MOU is funded with Federal funds. With the transition to CalAIM Payment Reform, the fee-for-service portion of the MOU will be funded with Medi-Cal Patient Revenue which primarily consists of Federal funds. The amount of Federal funds is contingent on the client’s aid code, and the State issued rate for the service. Funding for FY 2025-26 was included in the Adopted Budget. Funding will be included in BWell’s proposed budget for FY 2026-27 contingent on the Board of Supervisors’ approval.

Funding Sources	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27	Total
General Fund				\$ -
State				\$ -
Federal				\$ -
Fees				\$ -
Other: Medi-Cal Patient Revenue	\$ 5,800	\$ 41,400	\$ 42,100	\$ 89,300
Total	\$ 5,800	\$ 41,400	\$ 42,100	\$ 89,300

Special Instructions:

Please return one (1) Minute Order and one (1) executed copy of the AIHS Memorandum of Understanding to Marilyn Simon-Gersuk at msimongersuk@sbcbswell.org, Sara Hernandez at sahernandez@sbcbswell.org, and to BWell Contracts at bwellcontractsstaff@sbcbswell.org.

Attachments:

Attachment A – American Indian Health and Services, Inc. Memorandum of Understanding FY 24-27

Contact Information:

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Sara Hernandez
Contract Analyst
sahernandez@sbcbswell.org