

Mara Madrigal-Weiss
Chair
Mayra E. Alvarez
Vice Chair
Toby Ewing, Ph.D.
Executive Director

State of California

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMISSION

Minutes of Teleconference Meeting
November 18, 2021

MHSOAC
1325 J Street, Suite 1700
Sacramento, CA 95814

Members Participating:

Mara Madrigal-Weiss, Acting Chair
Mayra Alvarez
Mark Bontrager
Keyondria Bunch, Ph.D.
Steve Carnevale
Shuonan Chen

Senator Dave Cortese
Itai Danovitch, M.D.
David Gordon
Gladys Mitchell
Alfred Rowlett
Khatera Tamplen

Members Absent:

John Boyd, Psy.D.
Sheriff Bill Brown
Assembly Member Wendy Carrillo
Tina Wooton

Staff Present:

Toby Ewing, Ph.D., Executive Director
Anna Naify, Consulting Psychologist
Maureen Reilly, Acting Chief Counsel
Norma Pate, Deputy Director, Program,
Legislation, and Administration

Brian Sala, Ph.D., Deputy Director,
Research and Chief Information Officer
Tom Orrock, Chief of Stakeholder
Engagement and Grants
Sharmil Shah, Psy.D., Chief of Program
Operations

CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chair Mara Madrigal-Weiss called the teleconference meeting of the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC or Commission) to order at 9:02 a.m. and welcomed everyone.

The Acting Chair explained that stated Commissioners Lynne Ashbeck and Ken Berrick have termed out. The Acting Chair thanked them for their great vision and leadership to the Commission's work and noted that they will be honored at a future meeting.

The Acting Chair welcomed new Commissioners Mark Bontrager, filling the role of health care service plan provider, and Alfred Rowlett, filling the role of mental health professional. The Acting Chair invited them to introduce themselves.

The Acting Chair thanked Posh Walker, LGBTQ Program Director, Cal Voices, for asking the Commission to strengthen its understanding of pronouns and misgendering. This includes a goal to improve its practices by exploring opportunities for trainings, working with partners, and working with website developers to make trainings available on the website.

The Acting Chair reviewed the goals and objectives of the Commission's Strategic Plan for 2020-2023 to advance the Commission's vision of "Wellbeing for all Californians," which were included in the meeting materials, and shared how this meeting's agenda items support those goals.

Amariani Martinez, Commission staff, reviewed the meeting protocols.

Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss gave the announcements as follows:

Announcements

- There will be no Commission meeting in December. Regularly scheduled meetings will continue in January.
- The October 2021 Commission meeting recording is now available on the website. Most previous recordings are available upon request by emailing the general inbox at mhsoac.mhsoac.ca.gov.

Through the Executive Director and the Chair's delegated authority, Monterey County and Lake County Innovation projects were approved. Detailed information is included in the meeting materials.

Staff Changes

Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss invited Dr. Brian Sala, Deputy Director of Research and CIO, to share recent staff changes. Deputy Director Sala introduced Kallie Clark, Ph.D., Senior Research Data Analyst and Lead of the Summative Triage Evaluation Project, who joined the Commission since the last Commission meeting.

On behalf of the Commission, the Acting Chair welcomed Dr. Clark to the Commission.

Research and Evaluation Committee Update

Commissioner Danovitch, Chair of the Research and Evaluation Committee, provided a brief update of the work of the Committee since the last Commission meeting:

- The Committee initiated a search to fill the position of Chief of the Research and Evaluation Division. In the meantime, staff is working hard to continue the work that the Division is responsible for.
- Three new staff were brought in to lead the Triage Summative Evaluation and, in addition, staff is developing a proposal including addressing staffing needs and resources to be able to evaluate the Mental Health Student Services Act (MHSSA), as required.
- The Committee continues to work on the data infrastructure space and gaining access to and linking databases so those databases can be interrogated and insights can be developed that inform actions.
- The Committee is going through a process of connecting Commission goals and objectives to resources to prioritize efforts and ensure effectiveness.
- The next Research and Evaluation Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 12th.

Cultural and Linguistic Competency Committee Update

Commissioner Alvarez, Chair of the Cultural and Linguistic Competency Committee (CLCC), provided a brief update of the work of the Committee since the last Commission meeting:

- The November meeting included a robust discussion about the Commission's Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) and how the Committee can contribute to its success.
- The Committee discussed the Immigrant and Refugee Stakeholder Request for Proposals (RFP) and the Triage Request for Applications (RFA) about how to operationalize racial equity in those spaces.
- The next CLCC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 8th. The Committee will continue discussions from the last meeting and will add a discussion around prevention and early intervention, as requested by Committee Members.

Prevention and Early Intervention Subcommittee Update

Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss also serves as Chair of the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Subcommittee, and in that capacity provided a brief update of the work of the Subcommittee since the last Commission meeting:

- The Subcommittee continues to work on updating the drafts of the report.
- The next Subcommittee meeting will soon be scheduled for early next year.

Client and Family Leadership Committee Update

No update was given.

Roll Call

Maureen Reilly, Acting Chief Counsel, called the roll and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Andrea Crook, Director of Advocacy, ACCESS California, a program of Cal Voices, stated concern about the lack of transparency regarding the Governor appointments. The speaker was surprised that Chair Ashbeck and Commissioner Berrick were removed from the Commission, although they are still listed as Members of the Commission and Chairs of Committees. There are Commissioners who have been Members of the Commission for many years who rarely attend Commission meetings; or, when they do come, they stay only to ensure that a quorum is present and then shortly after leave the meeting.

Andrea Crook stated that Chair Ashbeck and Commissioner Berrick provided consistency. There are many individuals who have experience with behavioral health across the state that have applied to be on the Commission and have not heard back regarding their applications. The speaker asked about the Commissioner selection process and that it be more open to the public.

Poshi Walker, LGBTQ Program Director, Cal Voices, echoed the comments of the previous speaker. The agenda lists Chair Ashbeck as chairing this meeting. The speaker thanked the Commission for its response regarding pronouns. Chair Ashbeck privately reached out to Poshi Walker to ask for recommendations and suggestions regarding pronouns. The speaker sent recommendations to Chair Ashbeck thinking she was still chair, at least for this meeting.

Poshi Walker noted that the Commission now has no representative for the Central Valley. It is important that the needs of all communities are being met. The speaker stated concern that this was so sudden that it was not on the agenda. This process needs to be far more transparent and public so that active, meaningful Commissioners are not lost without any explanation.

Craig Durfey, Founder, Parents for the Rights of Developmentally Disabled Children (PRDDC), suggested agendizing a discussion on the Utah model of digital wellness and safe technology and showing the movie Screenagers, which can be found on the PRDDC website about youth who are addicted to technology.

Stacie Hiramoto, Director, Racial and Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition (REMHDCO), expressed shock at the sudden departure of the Commissioners. The speaker welcomed the new Commissioners and thanked Commissioner Alvarez for a robust meeting of the CLCC and for acknowledging that the issue of the list of PEI priorities that the Commission is to establish per Senate Bill (SB) 1004 will be placed on the next agenda. CLCC Members asked for this because both REMHDCO and the

California Reducing Disparities Project (CRDP) have prioritized this and would like to see transition age youth (TAY) who are currently not enrolled in college added to the PEI funding priorities as well as making clear that community-defined evidence-based practices are also added to that list of priorities.

Josefina Alvarado Mena, CEO, Safe Passages, one of the 35 Implementation Pilot Projects of the CRDP, and Chair, CRDP Cross-Population Sustainability Committee, echoed the comments of the previous speaker about including TAY who are currently not enrolled in college in the PEI funding priorities as well as making clear that community-defined evidence-based practices are also added to the list of priorities. The COVID-19 pandemic has exponentially amplified these disparities in these communities and community-defined evidence-based practices are proven to be effective in addressing the mental health needs of these communities.

Hannah Bichkoff, Policy Director, Cal Voices, stated the Help@Hand Multi-County Innovation Collaborative Project is being severely mismanaged. Cal Voices has tracked this project since its inception and has warned the implementing bodies of the risk of irresponsibly testing technology applications on the severely mentally ill. The speaker shared additional statistics that Cal Voices has compiled, through a recent public records request on the Help@Hand project, that illustrate why this issue warrants immediate attention and a massive overhaul of funding and services:

Hanna Bichkoff stated between January 20, 2021, and May 20, 2021, \$132,506.85 was spent on 501 cell phones that were intended to be disseminated to members of the public mental health system. Cell phone records reveal a maximum of 20 of the 501 active lines are actually being used. This should not be surprising to Commissioners, given that an evaluation report by UC Irvine from September 2018 to December of 2019 revealed that phone contracts should not be done since payments are being made monthly for cell phones that have yet to be unboxed.

Hanna Bichkoff stated the public records request also revealed that at least five separate evaluating bodies have been contracted for Help@Hand, however, no data is available related to the total number of individuals served by participating counties and across the state and, more importantly, the impact of technology applications on mental health outcomes among the severely mentally ill.

Hanna Bichkoff stated the \$1.5 million contract with an application called Mindstrong has failed in multiple counties, some of which have now exited the Help@Hand project. With the understanding that Innovation projects are exploratory in nature, the speaker asked the Commission at what point it is determined that a particular intervention is not meeting consumer need and must be terminated in order to fund more effective and successful services. The speaker stated the hope that the Commission will investigate Help@Hand and honor its commitment to community stakeholders.

Michelle LaPlace-Watts, Mental Health and Violence Prevention Manager and Clinician at Catholic Charities East Bay, one of the 35 Implementation Pilot Projects of the CRDP, stated community knows how to heal community. The speaker asked that PEI funding be redirected to the community-defined evidence-based practice programs that have collected data for over five years that demonstrate the effectiveness of their

models of service, and that the PEI funding priorities be put on the agenda for the December 8th CLCC meeting.

Laurel Benhamida, Ph.D., Muslim American Society – Social Services Foundation (MAS-SSF) and REMHDCO Steering Committee, supported Stacie Hiramoto and Josefina Alvarado Mena’s comments. The speaker provided examples of why TAY who are not currently enrolled in college should be included in the PEI funding priorities.

The Acting Chair also expressed surprise at the recent Commissioner term-outs. Notification was received from the Governor’s Office that Chair Ashbeck and Commissioner Berrick’s terms had expired and that new appointments had been made. Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss stated, although Chair Ashbeck and Commissioner Berrick will be greatly missed, the Commission looks forward to the perspective and lens that the newly-appointed Commissioners will bring.

ACTION

1: October 28, 2021, MHSOAC Meeting Minutes

Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss stated the Commission will consider approval of the minutes from the October 28, 2021, teleconference meeting.

Public Comment

Poshi Walker thanked the scribe for their attention to detail in documenting public comment. The pronoun recommendations sent to Chair Ashbeck include options that would not put a burden on the scribe to have to know everyone’s individual pronouns but a way to document the meeting minutes without using pronouns at all.

Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss stated staff also has Poshi Walker’s recommendations and will be reviewing them.

Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss asked for a motion to approve the minutes.

Commissioner Alvarez made a motion to approve the October 28, 2021, teleconference meeting minutes.

Commissioner Gordon seconded.

Action: Commissioner Alvarez made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Gordon, that:

- *The Commission approves the October 28, 2021, Teleconference Meeting Minutes as presented.*

Motion carried 9 yes, 0 no, and 3 abstain, per roll call vote as follows:

The following Commissioners voted “Yes”: Commissioners Alvarez, Bunch, Carnevale, Chen, Cortese, Danovitch, Gordon, Mitchell, and Tamplen.

The following Commissioners abstained: Commissioners Bontrager and Rowlett, and Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss.

ACTION

2: Election of the MHSOAC Chair and Vice Chair for 2022

Presenter:

- Maureen Reilly, Acting Chief Counsel

Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss stated nominations for Chair and Vice Chair for 2022 will be entertained and the Commission will vote on the nominations and elect the next Chair and Vice Chair.

Ms. Reilly briefly outlined the election process and asked for nominations for Chair of the MHSOAC for 2022.

Action: Commissioner Tamplen made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Bunch, that:

- *The Commission elects Vice Chair Mara Madrigal-Weiss as Chair of the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission for 2022.*

Motion carried 12 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain, per roll call vote as follows:

The following Commissioners voted "Yes": Commissioners Alvarez, Bontrager, Bunch, Carnevale, Chen, Cortese, Danovitch, Gordon, Mitchell, Rowlett, and Tamplen, and Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss.

Ms. Reilly asked for nominations for Vice Chair of the MHSOAC for 2022.

Action: Commissioner Tamplen made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Bunch, that:

- *The Commission elects Commissioner Mayra Alvarez as Vice Chair of the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission for 2022.*

Motion carried 12 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain, per roll call vote as follows:

The following Commissioners voted "Yes": Commissioners Alvarez, Bontrager, Bunch, Carnevale, Chen, Cortese, Danovitch, Gordon, Mitchell, Rowlett, and Tamplen, and Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss.

Public Comment

Craig Durfey suggested agendizing a discussion on the Utah model of digital wellness and safe technology and appointing a liaison to bring awareness of this issue. The speaker sent a letter to staff listing programs that will bring wellness.

Jeremiah Aja, Assistant Director, Wellness Together School Mental Health, spoke in support of the newly-elected leadership team and the work they are doing and stated they will depend on the team to make data-driven decisions and to consider the stories behind the numbers.

BREAK

ACTION

3: Shasta County Innovation Plan

Presenter:

- Donnell Ewert, Director, Shasta County Health and Human Services Agency

Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss stated the Commission will consider approval of \$1,750,000 in Innovation spending funding for Shasta County's Hope Park Innovation Project, and asked the county representative to present this agenda item.

Donnell Ewert, Director, Shasta County Health and Human Services Agency, provided an overview, with a slide presentation, of the need, proposed project to address the need, community contribution, learning objectives, evaluation, and budget of the proposed Hope Park Innovation Project. The Director stated the proposed project is an innovative approach to mitigating adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) through an intergenerational approach focusing on teens and older adults. The Director stated Pathways to Hope for Children (PHC) is a long-standing organization in the community that was previously called the Child Abuse Prevention Coordinating Council. The PHC will be establishing a new teen center in the city of Redding using a similar model.

Commissioner Questions

Commissioner Alvarez asked how the county is responding to the unique needs of the county's diverse communities in the activities being promoted and the work being done with young people and older adults and how culture and identity play a role in these sorts of interventions.

Michael Burke, Executive Director, PHC, stated the PHC often works with the tribal council and population and has tribal members on the board of directors, and when the PHC began working with teenagers, it focused on being all-encompassing and looked for ways to bring culture into the teen center. The PHC looks forward to expanding this to the older adult population, where older adults can share their views, opinions, and life experiences with the teens.

Commissioner Carnevale stated one of the best ways to ensure success and scaling this model over time is to provide scientific efficacy of its effectiveness. UCSF has the ability to do that and has the ability to deeply study the brain impacts of this kind of a program. The Commissioner suggested getting NAH Foundation funding to support that kind of study, and asked the county to reach out offline to coordinate something like that.

Public Comment

Craig Durfey suggested studies for the Commission to review. The speaker sent a letter to the Commission documenting research for its consideration. The speaker suggested agendizing a discussion on the Utah model of digital wellness and safe technology and showing the movie Screenagers, which can be found on the PRDDC website about youth who are addicted to technology.

Tiffany Carter, Statewide Advocacy Liaison, Cal Voices, acknowledged the intersection that Shasta County is trying to accommodate between youth and the elderly. The collaboration and unique opportunities for these two populations to come together is amazing and necessary across the state. The speaker had two concerns: there is no mention of the peer role in this project and no mention of how the county plans to protect the vulnerable youth from adult predators to ensure that there is protection on both sides.

Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss asked the county to respond to comments and concerns brought up during public comment.

Director Ewert stated the county understands the importance of lived experience and hopes adults with ACEs will bring their experience to this opportunity. The PHC has a process of vetting volunteers to ensure safety of the participants.

Executive Director Burke added that volunteers are vetted using several background checks, a 20-hour academy, and the rule of three, where no person is ever alone with a child at any time. The PHC is focused on protecting the vulnerable populations in the community. The PHC currently has 23 parent partners on staff who are peers who work with families. Peer support is vital and part of the PHC core values.

Commissioner Discussion

Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss asked for a motion to approve the proposed project.

Commissioner Mitchell moved to approve the proposed project.

Commissioner Alvarez seconded.

Action: Commissioner Mitchell made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Alvarez, that:

The Commission approves Shasta County's Innovation Plan, as follows:

Name: The Hope Park Project: An Intergenerational Approach to Improving Mental Health

Amount: Up to \$1,750,000 in MHSA Innovation Funds

Project Length: Five (5) Years

Motion carried 10 yes, 0 no, and 2 abstain, per roll call vote as follows:

The following Commissioners voted "Yes": Commissioners Alvarez, Bunch, Carnevale, Chen, Cortese, Danovitch, Gordon, Mitchell, and Tamplen, and Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss.

The following Commissioners abstained: Commissioners Bontrager and Rowlett.

ACTION

4: Alameda County Innovation Plan

Presenter:

- Yolanda Takahashi, Emergency Medical Services Coordinator, CATT Project Manager

Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss stated the Commission will consider augmenting the Community Assessment Transportation Team (CATT) Innovation Project for an additional \$4,759,312 in Innovation spending authority. The augmentation would bring the total authorized Innovation expenditure for this project to \$14,637,394 over five years. The original Innovation project was approved by the Commission on October 25, 2018, for \$9,878,082 over five years.

Commissioner Tamplen recused herself from the discussion and decision-making with regard to this agenda item pursuant to Commission policy.

Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss asked the county representative to present this agenda item.

Yolanda Takahashi, Emergency Medical Services Coordinator, CATT Project Manager, provided an overview, with a slide presentation, of the challenges, accomplishments, and lessons learned to date, needs which prompted this extension, how the plan will address the needs, and how the county plans to measure the outcomes.

Commissioner Questions

Commissioner Alvarez asked how the positions funded by the SB 82 Triage Grant differ from the positions requested through this Innovation extension request.

Stephanie Lewis, Division Director of Crisis Services, Alameda County Behavioral Health Care, stated the county's SB 82 Triage Grant program provides outreach and engagement post-crisis for chronically homeless individuals, high-utilizers, and for post-crisis follow-up. Division Director Lewis stated the Triage Grant closes the circle and provides intervention and linkage to care after individuals have contact with a mobile crisis team. CATT is one of the mobile crisis teams. The county is looking at CATT to speak to the other model teams to provide information about the best type of model for the county.

Commissioner Gordon asked what the county is doing to project the cost of sustainability for this project and if the county is preparing to switch to this model using its own funds.

Division Director Lewis stated it is still early in this project. The county is still learning from this project to determine if this is the best model to switch to, but is considering implementing a hybrid combination of all models currently being run in the county.

Public Comment

Craig Durfey encouraged the Commission to target children under 18, similar to an under-18 program being implemented in Nevada. The speaker's letter sent to staff contains additional details to help the Commission spend funding effectively.

Commissioner Discussion

Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss asked for a motion to approve the extension of the Innovation Project.

Commissioner Mitchell moved to approve the extension of the Innovation Project.

Commissioner Carnevale seconded.

Action: Commissioner Mitchell made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Carnevale, that:

The Commission approves Alameda County's Extension of their Innovation Project, as follows:

Name: Community Assessment Transportation Team (CATT)

Amount: Up to \$ \$4,759,312 in additional MHSO Innovation funds, to a total authority of \$14,637,394

Project Length: Five (5) Years

Motion carried 8 yes, 0 no, and 2 abstain, per roll call vote as follows:

The following Commissioners voted "Yes": Commissioners Alvarez, Bunch, Carnevale, Chen, Cortese, Gordon, and Mitchell, and Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss.

The following Commissioners abstained: Commissioners Bontrager and Rowlett.

Commissioner Tamplen rejoined the meeting.

ACTION

5: Anti-Bullying Project Outline and Authority to Execute Contracts

Presenters:

- Anna Naify, Consulting Psychologist
- Miriam Bookey, Partner and Founder, Program11

Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss stated the Commission will hear recommendations from the Anti-Bullying Advisory Committee and consider authorizing contracts to spend \$5 million to create a digital peer support network for children and youth who have been bullied based on their race, ethnicity, language, or country of origin.

Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss stated Commission staff outlined in their budget presentation in August that the Governor and Legislature included \$5 million in the Commission budget to address bullying with the stipulation that these funds be used to

support anti-bullying efforts very quickly. The budget called for these funds to be in contracts by the end of October. That deadline has past but there is additional work to be done.

Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss stated the Commission's Rules of Procedure generally require contracts above \$100,000 to be approved by the Commission. Given that the next Commission meeting is not scheduled until late January, the proposal on the agenda is to delegate spending authority to the Commission Chair and the Chair of the Advisory Committee.

Anna Naify, Psy.D., Consulting Psychologist, stated that bullying of youth has been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Bullying can deeply impact self-esteem and mental health and can lead to violence and self-harm. Youth spend a lot of time following social media, which is part of the foundation of this project. Dr. Naify provided an overview, with a slide presentation, of the background, timeline, strategy to address all youth, and project overview of the Anti-Bullying Peer Support Social Media Network Project to support youth who have experienced bullying.

Dr. Naify stated that the presentation would be made by Program 11 in its capacity as a consultant to the Commission. Marie Martin with Program 11 was introduced, filling in for Miriam Bookey, Partner and Founder of Program 11, who was unable to be in attendance.

Marie Martin continued the slide presentation and discussed the research methodology and findings. The presenter stated the main takeaways were that this program needs to be driven by peers, the peer voice must be involved throughout the process, and the program and accompanying social media campaign must come from the hearts and minds of youth. The presenter also stated the need to find ways to reach youth who do not have as much access to technology; and, noted that this program needs to be like a 24/7 crisis hotline with information on additional resources or counseling services.

Dr. Naify continued the slide presentation and discussed the Anti-Bullying Advisory Committee meetings, how ideas for future plans were shaped, and the core-components of the anti-bullying social media strategy, which will be the required attributes to look for in contractors for this program.

Commissioner Questions

Commissioner Gordon stated this program is badly needed and can be a prototype for work that can be done on other issues and in other areas of the state to connect more effectively with youth.

Commissioner Alvarez commended the inclusive process that went into this project and the intentionality of having youth at the table. Commissioner Alvarez stated there is an opportunity to align this program with the Governor's Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative and the hundreds of millions of dollars that are going to a virtual social platform to utilize technology to improve access to services and education for young people. This highlights the need for a Children's Mental Health Subcommittee, as approved at the last Commission meeting, to explore how various initiatives can work together to strengthen the commitment to child and youth wellbeing.

Executive Director Ewing stated the Legislature made it clear that this funding was expected to be in contract by October 31, 2021. Although that 90-day turnaround date has passed, the proposed motion will allow the Commission to act quickly. The Commission has reached out to the Governor's Office to ensure that this work is in alignment with the broader statewide initiative and to highlight the significance of youth engagement. Director Ewing stated the timing did not allow for alignment on the front end for this project, but it is hoped that, as the work moves forward, the Commission can inform the Governor's initiative in strategic ways.

Commissioner Alvarez stated Children's Partnership led the Hope, Healing, and Health Collective, which similarly looks at mental health and wellbeing, and social media came up as an incredible tool and resource for young people. By contrast, there is an important reality that social media is also damaging. The Commissioner asked about protections being put in place for this social media tool and about the accountability the social media contractors should have to prioritize the wellbeing of young people. The Commissioner also stated the need to be cautious in the approach so this tool is not abused and that young people are protected.

Executive Director Ewing agreed. National and international inquiry is ongoing in this area. Executive Director Ewing noted that this issue came up in the Commission's work on suicide prevention, as well. The Executive Director stated the need for the Commission to work with organizations that have more expertise in care delivery and engagement. Part of the reason for the delay in this work is that this project, although so urgent and seemingly straightforward, is pulling together a wide range of interests. This includes social media, youth-driven content; anti-bullying strategies; and the vision, voice, and vote of young people. Furthermore, this work must be done in a way that recognizes the trauma associated with bullying and related behaviors that are driven by race, ethnicity, language, and culture. It has been difficult to find partners in the community who can do that on a statewide basis and with only \$5 million.

Executive Director Ewing stated, when alerting the Governor's Office that this is a very ambitious undertaking, their response was for the Commission to do the best it can, quickly. The proposed motion is to delegate the approval authority so work can be accomplished prior to the next Commission meeting, which is scheduled at the end of January of next year.

Commissioner Alvarez asked about monitoring and evaluation, and noted that, although \$3.5 million sounds like a lot of money, targeted social media buys are expensive. The Commissioner asked about the ability for counties to track whether this program is making a difference, such as, if an uptick is seen in Asian and Pacific Islander (API) youth utilizing services through community partners after an advertisement run, or after promoting certain partners or programs. That correlation is ambitious, but it is important to learn if this investment leads to young people utilizing services and supports. Also, there is an opportunity for this project to inform the Governor's initiative during the planning year process as a result of the lessons learned from this evaluation.

Executive Director Ewing agreed that social media is expensive. The \$3.5 million figure is a general guideline as the Commission works toward specific details to finetune.

Executive Director Ewing stated that tracking impacts has not yet been considered, in part because there is such an urgency; but it is the intent, particularly as the Commission engages with the Administration on the broader initiative around that digital strategy. There is much to learn in terms of the impacts seen using social media strategies. Executive Director Ewing expressed that sometimes it seems private sector partners are better at tracking social impacts than the Commission is, and this is an opportunity to learn more about such strategy.

Public Comment

Stacie Hiramoto stated concern that this project is funded by the API Equity Budget sponsored by the California Asian American and Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus (AAPILC). The AAPILC website states that these funds will be used to fund critical resources in response to the surge in anti-API hate, as well as address the longstanding racial inequities that have harmed the API community for generations. It goes on to say that the \$5 million will be used to support a peer social network of APIs to connect with and support each other through the use of social media.

Stacie Hiramoto stated the legislative intent is clear. The speaker stated the need to make it more clear to the Commission and the public that this is the purpose of these funds and, just as important, that the project administered by the Commission is designed to serve this express purpose. The materials and content at the last Anti-Bullying Advisory Committee meeting did not reflect that the project was specific to the bullying due to race, ethnicity, or country of origin, let alone targeting API youth. For example, the project visual made during the presentation only had white youth illustrated, not youth of color.

Stacie Hiramoto stated it is unclear if the research was based on youth who are predominately from the API community. Although the program should not exclude any youth, it should focus on API peers. Nothing in Proposition 209 inhibits or restricts the state from modified public issues pertaining to discrete communities based on race, ethnicity, or sexual preference or identity. Consequently, the state can and does issue solicitations and contracts that target particular communities. At the very least, REMHDCO believes that the contractors associated with this project should be from the API community or have extensive experience working with the API community. So far, this does not seem to be the case. For these reasons, REMHDCO does not yet support this motion.

Poshi Walker echoed the comments of the previous speaker, adding that the legislation states there is supposed to be an emphasis on students in kindergarten and grades one to twelve. In all meeting materials including the Program11 survey results, there is no mention of strategies for younger youth, particularly children in kindergarten through sixth grade. There is also no mention of the very real and greater impact on Black and indigenous people of color (BIPOC) or API youth when racist bullying intersects with misogynistic anti-LGBTQ and body-shaming bullying, although there is research to show that that doubles or triples the impact.

Poshi Walker stated the Program 11's literature review presented to the Anti-Bullying Advisory Committee contained a statement from peer-reviewed literature that states

interventions with an in-person element with a professional, peer, or parent were associated with greater effectiveness, adherence, and lower dropout than fully automatized or self-administered interventions. The speaker questioned whether the bulk of the funding should go to social media with the least amount of funding going to the peer-to-peer intervention that this research shows would be more effective.

Poshi Walker stated there is confusion among the Anti-Bullying Advisory Committee Members as to whom this program should be for. The digital divide is very real, especially when speaking about children. The speaker questioned how many kindergarteners are on social media where parents let them roam the internet. The speaker noted that this issue of the digital divide has also been shown as a huge barrier for the Help@Hand Project.

Poshi Walker suggested that the Commission go back to the Legislature and the API Caucus and state that there is a need for a longer timeline, when the direction of the project causes so much uncertainty. The speaker stated, at the very least, the \$5 million will be spent on a well-intentioned albeit ineffective initiative, but far more concerning is the potential for harm to youth as their needs appear to be being addressed but actually are not. This includes the awarding of no-bid contracts and the lack of transparency regarding who is funded and why marginalized community-based organizations, particularly those from the API communities, have not been given real access to these funds.

Poshi Walker urged and requested that the Commissioners rethink this proposal and not vote to allow for sole-source funding to happen prior to the January meeting.

Laurel Benhamida stated MAS-SSF is one of the CRDP Implementation Pilot Projects for API. The concerns outlined by the previous speakers are important to consider. The speaker stated parents are concerned about screentime issues and many children are tired of screentime after last year. There is limited access with lower incomes and with younger children. Parents and children may prefer a human person-to-person contact rather than social media, especially post-bullying.

Laurel Benhamida stated groups have been victims of and traumatized by electronic surveillance and bullying. The speaker suggested extreme caution with any vendors used and referred the Commission to the Facebook Papers and the Pegasus Papers for examples.

Steve Leoni, consumer and advocate, spoke in support of Stacie Hiramoto's comments, and yet noted that it would be difficult to do this project with only that audience and purpose. If it is done well and everyone is reached, it will cover that audience and purpose, but it does not seem possible to reach everyone. Bullying hurts all youth populations no matter the cause of it.

Steve McNally, family member, stated the law as noted by Stacie Hiramoto might change how the Commission should reflect the focus of this project, which might be to tighten down all the API communities across the state and link them into a much more powerful unit to support children. The speaker stated there is an opportunity for Commissioners to make a direct request to the California Behavioral Health Planning Commission and the 59 behavioral health boards in California to collect data to support

these initiatives. The behavioral health care agencies and boards of supervisors have taken away the power of the local behavioral health boards.

Steve McNally stated, without tightening down what is in the law, it makes it difficult to get anything done at the local level. The speaker suggested intentionally leveraging unspent Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding for this project that is sitting in the counties, particularly the larger counties. The speaker suggested that the Commission determine work that is unaffordable but that is needed so the counties can put this unspent funding into anti-bullying efforts. The speaker suggested linking powers and communities across the state to make them more influential to help families and children. It would be helpful to tighten down what is already in place to bring down silos because silos affect families.

Craig Durfey described articles and areas on two websites that may help with issues such as bullying. School districts have stated if it is not in law, it will not happen. AB 272 warned about technology in schools and cellphones and yet Sacramento has not yet followed Utah's mission example.

Sophie Suh spoke in support of the proposed motion. As a youth with lived experience, the speaker stated the importance of getting support through social media. The speaker stated, although social media might be harmful to teens, the fact must be realized that individuals all over the world will utilize social media anyway. It is a platform that is very popular and cannot be changed – individuals will use social media even if it is detrimental to them. The speaker encouraged the Commission to use social media to advantage for this proposal. Having positive support on social media would have made the speaker's experience with bullying on social media better. The speaker noted that there will not only be support on social media but there will be therapists and others who are trained to deal with these issues in combination with the social media platform, which would make the proposed project effective.

Avery Hulong-Vicente, Advocacy Coordinator, Lived Experience Advocacy Diversity (LEAD) Program, California Association of Mental Health Peer-Run Organizations (CAMHPRO), echoed Stacie Hiramoto and Posh Walker's comments and pointed out that, if the intention is to address API bullying, there cannot be a blanket way of addressing it while including other marginalized communities. There have been specific attacks on the API community. The needs of that specific community need to be addressed; yet, there is an incredible lack of support specific to language barriers, the immigrant experience, intergenerational needs, multi-generational family households, and culturally-competent and culturally-sensitive care.

Avery Hulong-Vicente stated, as a first-generation Filipina immigrant with lived experience and a consumer of mental health needs growing up in a large Filipino community, there is a huge lack of resources for the API youth. As someone who sought out those services, the speaker felt silenced and further marginalized when entering these "general youth spaces." The speaker suggested, to do this right, highlight the API experience and API youth, showcase the needs, and show images of API youth in social media. The speaker requested that the intention be refocused on supporting the API community, if that is what these funds were intended for.

Commissioner Discussion

In response to public comments about the proposed program, Commissioner Mitchell supported the intent of focused outreach. The Commissioner would, for example, support a social media strategy aimed particularly at African American Youth. Knowing about the bullying of the Asian American community over the past year, the Commissioner agreed that whatever contract is entered into to provide this social media strategy, it should be very clear that the contractor and those involved should have skill, experience, and ability to reach the API community. The Commissioner also suggested including that language in this motion, and agreed with the public commenters that the legislative intent needs to be honored.

Commissioner Mitchell asked if the motion can be amended to include that those individuals who have experience with API communities be included or intentionally sought out to provide contracted services.

Acting Chief Counsel Reilly suggested adding the sentence “the contractors shall also demonstrate expertise in outreach to the API community” to the proposed motion.

Executive Director Ewing clarified that the primary element of the motion is to delegate the Commission’s decision-making authority to the Commission Chair and the Anti-Bullying Advisory Committee Chair to approve the final contracts. The motion includes language on expertise. What that will look like will be articulated in the contracts as presented to them for approval.

Executive Director Ewing stated the purpose of having this Action Item on the agenda today is to help the Commission move quickly rather than waiting for the January meeting. It accelerates the process without losing fidelity to the values around youth-driven, culturally-competent social media, access to care, and anti-bullying on a statewide strategy. Commissioners can provide clear guidance today to ensure that the contracts will be aligned with the statutory obligations under the State Budget Act; and the advice from the Advisory Committee, and all comments heard today.

Commissioner Mitchell stated that the Commission recognizes the public’s concerns. The Commissioner stated the presentation was excellent, but it was not clear that the focus of this initiative is the API community.

Commissioner Rowlett asked the Commission Chair and the Advisory Committee Chair to report back to the Commission about the work being overseen and approved and whether it encompassed the concerns reflected in public comment.

Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss committed to working with Commissioner Chen in order to ensure that whoever is contracted with addresses the concerns brought forward by the public.

Executive Director Ewing stated all Commission contracts are publicly available and updated monthly. Staff is working to differentiate between contracts that were entered into through a sole-source process versus a competitive process; and contracts that were entered into through a public vote of the Commission versus contracts under \$100,000 that are not subject to a public vote under the Commission’s Rules of Procedure. Staff would be happy to bring this issue back at the next Commission

meeting in order to report on the final contracts. The motion is to try to accelerate the process in recognition of the urgent nature of the challenge being faced.

Commissioner Mitchell stated this was brought up because of the concerns raised during General Public Comment regarding the Help@Hand Application Project.

Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss asked for a motion to approve the staff recommendation.

Commissioner Alvarez moved to approve the staff recommendation as presented.

Commissioner Mitchell seconded.

Action: Commissioner Alvarez made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Mitchell, that:

- *The Commission authorizes the Executive Director, with the approval of the Anti-Bullying Advisory Committee Chair and Commission Chair, to enter into one or more contracts for up to \$5 million to develop and implement an anti-bullying social media network as directed by the State Budget. The contractor(s) shall have demonstrated expertise in multicultural youth engagement, social media and website management, and youth peer-to-peer support.*

Motion carried 8 yes, 0 no, and 1 abstain, per roll call vote as follows:

The following Commissioners voted "Yes": Commissioners Alvarez, Bontrager, Carnevale, Chen, Gordon, Mitchell, and Tamplen, and Acting Chair Madrigal-Weiss.

The following Commissioner abstained: Commissioner Rowlett.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:26 p.m.