



# DIRECTOR'S NEWSLETTER: Alcohol & Other Drug Services



Dr. Jei Africa

According to SAMHSA, more than one in four adults living with serious mental health problems also have a substance use problem. Reasons for this could be due to the following: certain substances can cause symptoms of a mental health problem, mental health problems can lead to drug or alcohol use or because mental health and substance use disorders share some underlying causes, including brain composition changes, vulnerabilities in genetics, and early exposure to stress or trauma. Knowing this co-occurrence is important for us to remember as behavioral health providers. BHRS Alcohol and Other Drug Services (AOD) provides a range

of prevention, treatment and recovery supports. While BHRS direct service staff provide outreach, engagement, assessment and case management to clients, contracted community organizations, such as those featured in this Newsletter, provide treatment and recovery services. The BHRS substance use treatment provider network has 25 facilities and 12 prevention partners who conduct community education, needs assessments, program evaluation and more. Our AOD team is a collaborative effort that saves lives every day!

## April Announcements



### Upcoming Mental Health and Recovery Services Job Fair

The [San Mateo County Contractors' Association](#) is hosting their annual, virtual Mental Health and Recovery Services Job Fair on **Thursday April 11 from 11am - 1pm**. The fair will feature over 13 Bay Area agencies spanning San Mateo, San Francisco, Santa Clara and Alameda Counties and will feature openings for MA, BA, and AA level positions. Please [register here](#) to connect with representatives from:

- Asian American Recovery Services
- Caminar
- Children's Health Council
- Daly City Youth Health Center
- Edgewood
- El Centro De Libertad
- Fred Finch Youth & Family Services
- HealthRIGHT 360
- Horizon Services, INC.
- Mental Health Services - YMCA SF
- Peninsula Family Service
- Project Ninety
- StarVista

### Forensic Psychiatry Fellowship has Successful ACGME Visit



BHRS is partnering with the Department of State Hospitals (DSH) to start a Forensic Psychiatry Fellowship. The Fellows would rotate at DSH sites as well as MacGuire Jail and other sites in the County. The Fellowship just had a successful site visit from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) with Fellows hopefully starting July 2025.

## Voices in the Field: Saving Lives One Connection at a Time

Voices of Recovery San Mateo County has opened the doors to a beautiful Recovery Connection Center on 650 Main Street in Redwood City. This space gives us the opportunity to expand our recovery services and incorporate new programs that provide opportunities for education, wellness and advocacy, and support services to individuals seeking long-term recovery. Our weekly Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP®) and Lifestyle Topic Groups have become a staple in many of our local residential programs and for the community.



“When developing my recovery action plan in a group setting, I heard stories from others who had similar experiences to mine. It gave me hope to see what others went through that shared alike struggles, were now thriving with years of clean time. Hearing their tools empowered me to try new things and rediscover who I am. I now have more than 4 years clean,” shares Veronica Antonelli, Administrative Assistant, Recovery Coach II and WRAP Facilitator at Voices of Recovery.

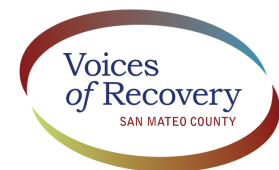
Voices of Recovery is the only substance use / dual diagnosis peer-led organization in San Mateo County. Each staff member uses their personal journey to connect and empower those who come in seeking a safe environment with people on similar paths. Staff and community members alike can connect and grow together while discovering how to live a lifestyle free from substance use and mental health challenges. The center has allowed us to bring recovery to over 100 participants since our move in November 2023.

The new peer mentoring program at Voices of Recovery, currently servicing over 20 peers, is also available for individuals interested in one-on-one coaching. Benefits of this program include facilitated resource referrals, creating personal goals, maintaining and receiving support with biweekly meetings. Volunteer and job opportunities are also available at Voices.

“The peer mentoring program is a valuable resource that has helped me and many others to enhance our lives and receive guidance from each other. I have gained the skill of being attentive to others' needs, maintaining relationships and empowering each other to overcome new obstacles,” says Heather Henry, Outreach Coordinator and Advanced WRAP Facilitator.

### Voices of Recovery Staff

To find out more about getting connected, visit [www.vorsmc.org](http://www.vorsmc.org). The Recovery Connection Center is open Monday: 10am - 7pm, Tuesday/Thursday: 10:30am - 7:30pm, Wednesday: 9am - 6pm, Friday: Remote, get in touch with staff via email at [info@vorsmc.org](mailto:info@vorsmc.org) or by phone at (650) 980-1922.



## Drifting to Driven: IMAT Shares a Client Story

The BHRS AOD Integrated Medication Assisted Treatment (IMAT) team has been meeting people where they are, literally and clinically, since 2015. We frequently encounter individuals with strong relationships to substances and anticipate and plan for co-occurring health conditions and long histories of trauma. This is the case with our client Noah:

We first met Noah (a pseudonym) in May 2023 on the 2nd floor inpatient unit of San Mateo Medical Center, he had been wandering from place to place, sleeping on the streets and wound up hospitalized. He had a startling daily routine that involved methamphetamine, drinking 2-4 pints of vodka, smoking a pack of cigarettes and a minimum half gram of heroin.

With compassionate case management, individualized psychoeducation and skilled motivational interviewing, Noah was agreeable to transition to Palm Ave Detox where he continued to work with the IMAT therapist and Case Management team and accepted Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) services at the HealthRIGHT 360 Medical clinic.

MAT is a progressive approach to treating substance use disorders that combines behavioral therapies and medications in addiction treatment. The target population is individuals with chronic alcohol and opioid-related issues who frequent SMMC Emergency Services, jail/probation, and primary care. These individuals are often disconnected from traditional behavioral health services and experiencing homelessness, compounding trauma and stigma.

Noah, who has a high ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) score of 6, says he, “grew up around dope,” his mother and stepfather were dealers, engaged in terrifying criminal activity, and that his sister was the first person to assist him with shooting methamphetamine.

Fast forward to April 2024. In nearly a year’s time:

- Noah is on suboxone and goes to his appointments regularly. He prioritizes his treatment and has even paid out of pocket to get suboxone on the street when there have been gaps.
- He has around 6 months sober from alcohol, meth, and opioids!
- He has learned skills to help him emotionally regulate to avoid conflict and other consequences.
- He has completed his Vocational Rehabilitation Services program and is in the process of obtaining employment.
- He meets with his case manager on a consistent basis for support with appointments, legal aid and other needs.
- He attends his psychiatry appointments and has learned to voice his needs appropriately.
- He participates in therapy for emotional support and is working on new skills to manage his symptoms of anxiety.
- He no longer vapes or smokes cigarettes/tobacco/nicotine.

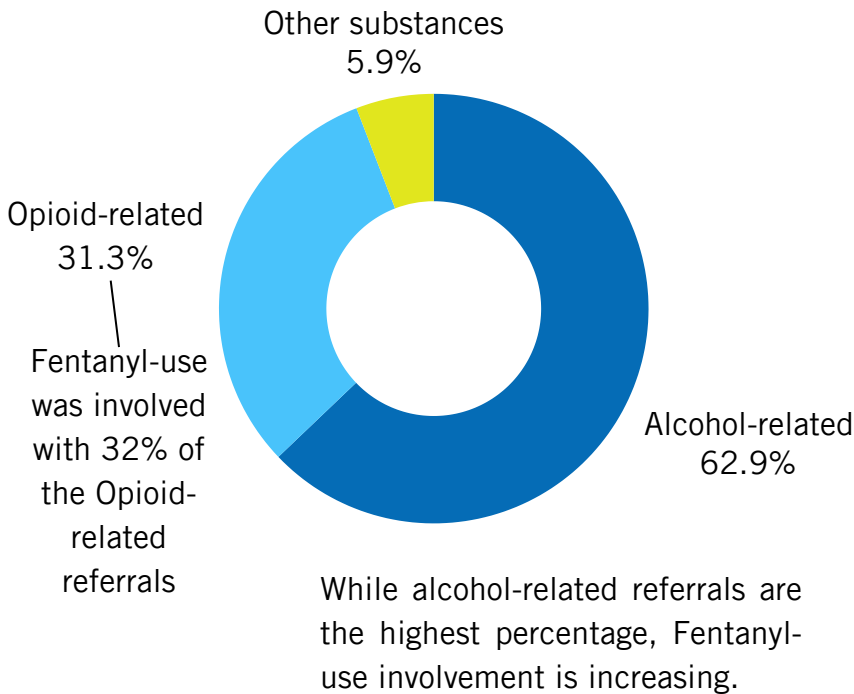
We are so proud of him and it is because we know where he started that this change in him is truly amazing. IMAT works. And it is BECAUSE we meet clients where they are at and we are NOT in the business of giving up on them.

**Katherine Williams and Todd Henderson.** Katherine is an IMAT Psychiatric Social Worker I and Todd is an IMAT Case Management / Assessment Specialist II.

# IMAT Referral Data: March 2023 - February 2024

IMAT has responded to **1,519** referrals in the past year:

## Type of Referrals



## Referral Sources

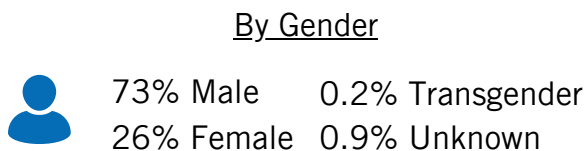
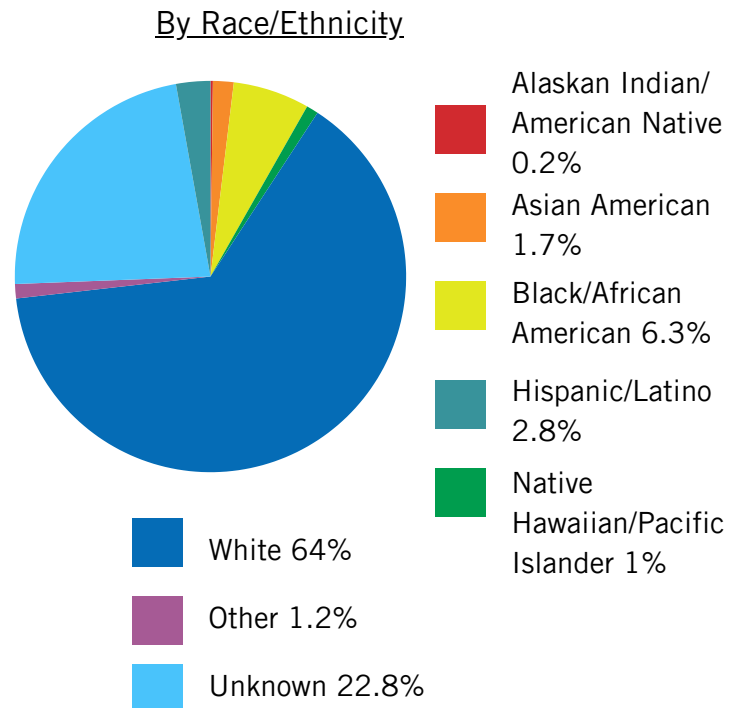
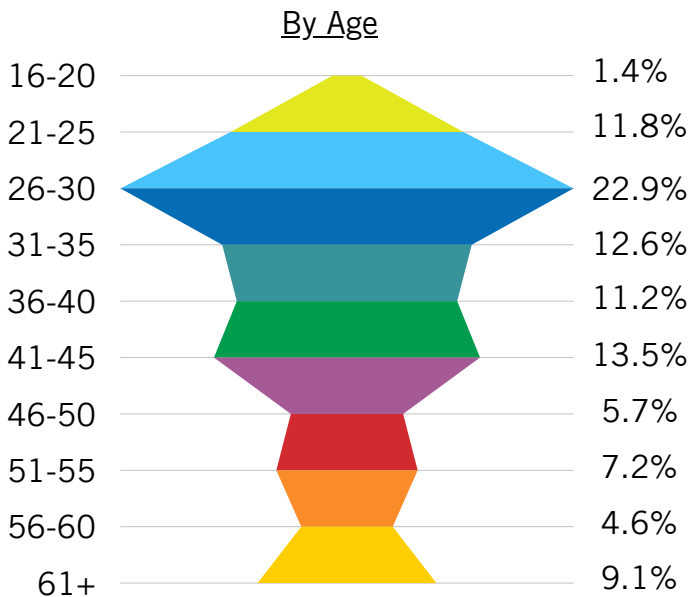
- 73%** of referrals came from San Mateo Medial Center, primarily from the Emergency Department where IMAT staff are present 7 days a week.
- 17%** came from County & community-partnered agencies/organizations

## Linkage to Services



- Of encounters resulted in follow up referrals to treatment services
- 72%** of referrals went to a substance use disorder treatment provider
  - 28%** went to a mental health treatment provider

## Client Demographics



IMAT acknowledges the disparity in the race/ethnicity data of populations served. While there are gaps in data collection and reporting, IMAT continues equity efforts in earnest.

## “Heart Work”: Youth Prevention in North San Mateo County

On February 4th 2005, an alcohol-related accident took the lives of two young people in Pacifica, Stephanie Echeverri, 16, and Mary Bier’s nephew Jonathan, 19. In the months following, leaders from Jefferson Union High School District (JUHSD), Youth Leadership Institute and Asian American Recovery Services came together to form a community coalition, Pacifica Prevention Partnership, so this would never happen again. This is where Mary, former mayor of Pacifica and current Pacifica City Councilmember, says her Heart Work began.

In the almost 20 years since, Mary has been implementing alcohol and drug prevention strategies in North San Mateo County. Once a stand-alone community coalition within JUHSD, Pacifica Prevention Partnership is now part of the Daly City Youth Health Center where Mary is the Director of Alcohol and Other Drug Services.

For Mary, youth leadership is at the heart of the work. The Be the Change Youth Coalition (BTC), consists of over 45 students who work together to promote mental wellness through community outreach, research, policy advocacy, health education and media. The health education program brings information and resources to youth and adults about alcohol, vaping nicotine and cannabis, prescription drugs and overdose awareness.

Be The Change Youth Coalition’s youth led advocacy allows the voice of young people to be recognized by local decision makers. Current programs include:

- Community based research, surveys and focus groups, including the Youth Access Survey
- “It’s Always Something” Podcast
- Youth Civic Empowerment Training

Mary’s newest contribution, Innovative Strategies for Prevention and Intervention through Restorative Education (INSPIRE), is a brief intervention program that supports youth in changing their relationship with substances through motivational interviewing and goal setting. Led by program coordinator Miguel Duenas, INSPIRE is currently being implemented in JUHSD and at allcove San Mateo.

“I am so proud of the youth I work with. BTC showcased their work at our annual youth summit on March 16th for a room of over 100 people. Learning and growing alongside them has been the honor of a lifetime. Heart Work is the best work!” says Mary.



Mary Bier at Pacifica’s Youth Summit 2023

BHRS works with Mary and JUHSD to provide community education presentations, youth groups, policy advocacy, merchant education (providing information to alcohol and cannabis merchants on practices to reduce underage access) and social media outreach.

**Mary Bier and Michelle Sudyka.** Michelle works with the BHRS AOD Community Health Promotion Unit on prevention of substance misuse. She also serves as the training coordinator for the AOD County staff and contractors implementing treatment and prevention services.

For more information or to request an education presentation in the Pacifica area, please contact Mary at [mbier@jeffersonunion.net](mailto:mbier@jeffersonunion.net)