



March 17, 2020

The Honorable Alameda County Board of Supervisors
Administration Building
1221 Oak Street
Oakland, California 94612

Re: Urgent Action to Stabilize Safety Net Behavioral Health Services

Dear Board Members:

As an essential part of the health and well-being of Alameda County's most vulnerable residents, our members provide a critical safety net for low-income residents with behavioral health needs. As a direct result of the public health emergency caused by COVID-19, many nonprofit providers of behavioral health services for children, adolescents, adults and older adults will experience significant service disruptions that will impact cash flow and threaten the safety net of services for our clients. **We are well-positioned to help manage the social isolation and heightened emotional distress the crisis is creating—but we need early and decisive action by Alameda County leadership.**

We are writing to request the immediate changes to Alameda County Behavioral Health's invoicing process necessary to prevent behavioral health service disruptions for Alameda County residents resulting from COVID-19 public health emergency. Our members are doing all we can to reach our clients by phone and continue face-to-face services for clients experiencing acute mental health crises.

Despite these efforts, **the magnitude of disruptions resulting from the shelter in place order and the resulting financial loss will threatens our ability to remain open.** Additionally, Alameda County will lose federal funding by being unable to draw down federal financial participation funds (FFP). Without efforts to immediately address fiscal sustainability, the behavioral health system is at risk of collapse. **As a result, more than 70,509 low-income Alameda County residents with mental health needs are at risk of losing access to services.**

Effective March 11th, San Francisco County implemented a [Continuity of Payment for Nonprofit Suppliers in the Event of COVID-19 Related Disruptions Policy](#) (please see attached), in recognition of the critical role nonprofits play in delivering essential services:

“Nonprofit suppliers deliver essential services to San Francisco residents on behalf of and funded by the City and County of San Francisco. Due to the public health emergency related to COVID-19, certain programs may be required to close or cancel services or suffer other disruptions, which could have implications for cash flow, as the City typically only pays for actual services rendered.

It is the City's intent to support the sustainability of nonprofit suppliers by continuing to provide full or partial payment in the event of programmatic closures that are in accordance with official public health recommendations.”

We request that Alameda County implement the same policy in order to fully fund provider contract allocations and thereby prevent a long-term behavioral health crisis that will put vulnerable residents at risk, at a time when they will need support most.

Specifically, we respectfully ask that the honorable Board of Supervisors direct Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services to institute change to payment procedures by implementing a 1/12th monthly invoicing process, consistent with San Francisco's approach, retroactive to March 1st.

San Francisco County issued a policy on March 11, 2020 stating: *"Suppliers with Fee-for-Service contracts (i.e., primarily DPH suppliers with contracts with services billed based on units actually provided) should invoice for the month by calculating 1/12th of the contracted units of service, and should be prepared to offer documentation of specific services that were expected but unable to be delivered. For Medi-Cal covered services, DPH will ensure that the cost report settlement process appropriately accounts for the actual cost of services."*

Our number one goal is to ensure providers are able to maintain the critical safety net services our community needs during this crisis and in the long-term. Please let us know if you would like us to provide additional information.

Sincerely,



Josh Leonard
President
Alameda County Council of Community Mental Health Agencies

CC: Susan Muranishi, County Administrator
Colleen Chawla, Health Care Services Agency
Dr. Karyn Tribble, Behavioral Health Care Services

Attachment: [Continuity of Payment for Nonprofit Suppliers in the Event of COVID-19 Related Disruptions Policy](#)

Alameda County Council of Community Mental Health Agencies Members:

Abode Services
Alameda Family Services
Alternative Family Services
Asian Health Services
Bay Area Community Services
Bonita House, Inc.
Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency
Community Health for Asian Americans
Crisis Support Services of Alameda County
East Bay Agency for Children

Family Paths
Felton Institute
Fred Finch Youth Center
Girls Incorporated of Alameda County
Pathways Counseling Center
Horizon Services, Inc.
Hume Center
Jewish Family & Community Services of the East Bay
Kidango
La Clínica de La Raza
La Familia Counseling Service
LifeLong – East Bay Community Recovery Project
Lincoln
Mental Health Association of Alameda County
Peers Envisioning and Engaging in Recovery Services
Seneca Family of Agencies
Side By Side
UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland
WestCoast Children's Clinic
West Oakland Health Center