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### **Behavioral Health Releases Strategic Plan to Improve Community Health**

SAN LUIS OBISPO, Calif. --- San Luis Obispo County residents can expect substantial growth of local mental health and substance use disorder services thanks to the Behavioral Health Department's new Strategic Plan. The plan, which details goals through 2029, is the first of its kind following the pandemic.

The strategic plan focuses on five key areas that change the current behavioral health system: Prevention and Wellness, Community Services, Intensive Outpatient Services, Crisis Services, and Intensive Residential Services. It ambitiously states over 100 objectives that address the increasing needs of the community around mental health and substance use disorder treatment.

"To emerge from a difficult era marked by the pandemic, an explosion in opioid overdose and suicides, and a growing need for crisis services for all ages, the County has turned its sights forward," says SLO Behavioral Director Star Graber, PhD., LMFT. "The strategic plan serves to strengthen our commitment to having a mission and workforce that is equitable, flexible, and creative in its response to the emergent and unfolding behavioral health environment. We are ready to get to work."

The plan not only outlines how the department plans to expand its current programming, but also includes ways to increase healthcare access to new populations including students, adults over 60 years of age, LGBTQIA+ populations, and non-English speaking community members.

County officials acknowledge that while the plan's strategic goals are ambitious and vast, they cannot do everything, everywhere, all at once. Dividing the work over five years allows the department to achieve progress at a momentous pace, while still allowing time to adjust when they are met with challenges.

"Like most California counties, San Luis Obispo has a population with behavioral health issues impacted by the economy, lack of access, workforce shortages, stigma, and gaps in services," says Graber. "We are grateful that no matter what challenges may come our work is supported by dozens of County partners including local providers, agencies, County Administrators and Supervisors, advocates and the community at large who also see a need for this type of work here in SLO County."

More information as well as the complete Behavioral Health Strategic Plan 2024-2029 can be viewed online at [www.slocounty.ca.gov/BHStrategicPlan](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/BHStrategicPlan).

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