

## Julie Dachtler

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**From:** Gina Daleiden <gdaleiden@first5yolo.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 26, 2026 4:03 PM  
**To:** Sheila Allen; Lucas Frerichs; Mary Vixie Sandy; Angel Barajas; Oscar Villegas; Michael Webb  
**Cc:** Oliver Snow; Tara Thronson; Dotty Pritchard; Monica Rivera; Jack Johnson; Julie Dachtler  
**Subject:** First 5 Yolo Comments on BHSA Plan Formation, Item #24

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Dear Chair Allen, Member of the Board of Supervisors, and CAO Webb,

As the County moved forward in shaping its Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) Plan, on behalf of First 5 Yolo, I would like to again briefly highlight a core policy principle. A system that begins only after needs have become acute is, by definition, incomplete. The most effective, science-driven, and fiscally responsible behavioral health systems intervene early, before challenges escalate and become more expensive and intractable.

BHSA was designed to complete a continuum of care, allowing counties to serve children and adults who are at-risk of developing serious mental illness or substance use disorders, not only those already diagnosed or in crisis. Its aim is systems transformation—closing gaps, strengthening coordination, and investing earlier so that fewer individuals end up in higher-acuity, higher-cost care. Leveraging Medi-Cal funding support and community partnerships, including First 5 commissions, is encouraged. Recent guidance from California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) reinforces these goals.

DHCS publicly addressed commitment to an effective continuum in its BHSA “Myth vs. Reality” guidance, explaining that BHSA affirms that prevention and early intervention are critical components of a comprehensive behavioral health system. BHSA is intended to function as “a more integrated system where early intervention works in concern with intensive services.” The guidance flags that the statute includes Early Intervention funding within the Behavioral Health Services and Supports (BHSS) allocation, and that “Early Intervention programs may fund indicated prevention programs and services for individuals who are **at risk of, or** experiencing, early signs of a mental health or substance use disorder.” To underscore, DHCS states that, “**Individuals do not need a behavioral health diagnosis to receive prevention and early intervention services.**”

In December 2025, DHCS updated the BHSA County Policy Manual (Module 4) to further clarify that Early Intervention (EI) services may be provide to individuals **without** a diagnosis ,and that indicated prevention includes, but is not limited to, outreach, education, and support for children and families **experiencing risk factors** or early signs, **including trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences** (see DHCS Module 4 clarification here: [module 4](#)).

For Yolo County, it is important to note that BHSA explicitly maintains EI funding for children and directs attention to childhood trauma, including for children 0-5. This reflects a well-established body of research showing that unaddressed adversity in early childhood substantially increases the likelihood of later mental health crisis, school challenges, justice system involvement, and costly interventions. *Early Intervention for children is foundational to behavioral health outcomes.*

First 5 Yolo's Help Me Grow (HMG) program provides effective, data-supported EI, identifying and addressing concerns earlier, connecting families sooner, and preventing escalation of needs. HMG includes an intentional focus on Child Welfare Services families and plays an important role in prevention and early intervention with this priority population. We know that 72% of the CWS-involved children served by HMG scored in the monitor or concern range in at least one developmental area particularly social emotional, personal social, and program solving development. In alignment with BHSA's emphasis on integration and sustainability, First 5 Yolo is now actively billing Medi-Cal for eligible services, embedding early childhood intervention within the broader health care delivery system and providing leveraging opportunities with BHSA.

As you consider the County's BHSA Plan, First 5 Yolo encourages you to keep the continuum of behavioral health services clearly in view. A Plan that balances urgent, high-acuity needs with intentional investment in the earliest intervention will be stronger, aligned with the statute, and better positioned to improve outcomes and manage long-term costs for our County and our community.

Thank you for your continuing work to build an effective system of care in Yolo County.

All my best,

~Gina

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