



# NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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## Breaking Down Stigma and Creating Healing Spaces

*Mental health is essential to physical health and overall well-being*

**San Rafael, CA** – The COVID-19 pandemic led to long periods of sheltering in place and forced isolation over the past year for the sake of public health. Although those orders are over and residents are emerging from the home more often, the pandemic and associated health concerns remain.

While the [Marin County's Department of Health and Human Services](http://www.marincounty.org/health-human-services) (HHS) helps orchestrate the COVID-19 response and vaccination program, HHS' [Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Division](http://www.marincounty.org/bhrs) (BHRS) is committed to enhancing public awareness of mental health and dispelling the stigma surrounding it. Now more than ever, it's important to remember that mental health is essential to physical health and overall well-being.

On May 4, the Marin County Board of Supervisors [proclaimed](#) the month of May as Mental Health Awareness Month and [received a presentation](#) from BHRS. During May, communities across the country organize to raise awareness about the importance of caring for behavioral health alongside our physical health. Every day, millions of people face stigma and discrimination related to mental health, which leads to feelings of isolation and creates obstacles to early identification of mental illness and treatment. The past year has brought unprecedented stress and uncertainty while it highlighted the impacts of structural racism and inequities in access to health care.

"Approximately half of us will experience some type of mental health challenge over the course of a lifetime," said Dr. Jei Africa, Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS). "Greater trauma informed care and peer support services are needed to break down barriers to care and facilitate recovery. The lifespan of an individual with serious mental illness is likely to be 20-28 years shorter than the general population due to underlying health conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease."

Marin BHRS is always open. Any resident experiencing a mental health or substance use issue can call the 24-hour, confidential Access Line at 1-888-818-1115 or text MARIN to 741741. Marin BHRS provides outpatient, -more-

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residential, crisis services, and hospital care addressing specialty mental health and substance use service needs of Marin Medi-Cal beneficiaries and uninsured residents.

Recovery can and does happen, and all Marin residents should know that support and help is available regardless of any individual's situation. The [Mobile Crisis Response Team](#) responds to mental health and substance abuse crises and psychiatric emergencies in the community throughout Marin. They work collaboratively with Marin residents, community based mental health and substance abuse agencies, hospitals, and local law enforcement agencies to increase the safety of individuals in a crisis. Please [view a video](#) for further details of their services.

In support of Mental Health Awareness Month, BHRS is hosting a series of events focused on equity, mental health and building connections. On May 26, [BHRS will host a panel](#) to address trauma through decolonizing mental health. The past year revealed and magnified inequalities that exist in marginalized communities. Panelists will discuss the ways in which trauma impacts people of color through the lens of decolonizing mental health to liberate and empower the communities we serve and ourselves in the process. Learn more at [www.marinhhs.org/bhrs](http://www.marinhhs.org/bhrs) and see a full list of [May Mental Health events](#).

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