

Hawai'i Behavioral Health & Homelessness Statewide Unified Response Group (BHHSURG)



Opportunity from Crisis: Accelerated Efforts to Link and Sync Systems in a COVID-19 Environment

Long before the COVID-19 crisis, behavioral health and homelessness stakeholders across Hawai'i identified the need for a less fragmented effort to meet the comprehensive mental and physical health needs of the local community. Though numerous collaborations were already underway, the onset of the COVID-19 challenge accelerated and enhanced existing partnerships. On March 21, 2020, Department of Health's Behavioral Health Administration, the Governor's Office on Homelessness, the Department of Human Services' Homeless Programs Office, the county offices, the University of Hawai'i, and other system partners formed the Behavioral Health and Homelessness Statewide Unified Response Group (BHHSURG).

BHHSURG Short Term Goals

- Increasing providers' access to local and federal resources to enhance and scale up essential services throughout the pandemic.
- Continuing to connect clients with essential behavioral health and homelessness services.
- Amplifying communication with clients, providers, and the public about how to stay connected to behavioral health and homelessness resources and efforts.
- Developing safe spaces for individuals without shelter to adequately isolate and quarantine in the face of active symptomology and/or while awaiting test results.
- Obtaining and distributing personal protective equipment (PPE) and other critical supplies to providers via Resilience Hubs.

Subcommittees & Subject Matter Experts

- **Clinical and Operational Guidance:** Reviews clinically related information, and develops relevant guidance for providers, consumers, partners and the public.
- **Logistics and Planning:** Receives and distributes PPE and supplies through designated BHHSURG Resilience Hub warehouse locations statewide.
- **Contracts:** Provides process coordination for developing and executing contracted services for the COVID-19 statewide response.
- **Analytics, Epidemiology and Evaluation:** Collects, manages, evaluates and distributes data for decision-making.
- **Strategic Communications and Media:** Promotes and protects the mission of the BHHSURG.

Building the Team

At the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, leaders from different state entities were tasked with identifying subject matter experts to join a BHHSURG operations team. This group of individuals (who had not consistently worked together) were united by the common goal of serving the community during the pandemic. They prioritized system of care needs, interfaced with Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency and worked 7 days a week to accelerate the projects described in this document.

Temporary Quarantine & Isolation Center (TQIC)

Within 10 days of the formation of the BHHSURG, the group established a 26-unit TQIC facility on O'ahu. The TQIC aims to both (1) slow the spread of COVID-19 and (2) minimize the strain on local healthcare facilities by offering 24-hour care to symptomatic or COVID-positive individuals who cannot safely quarantine or recover in a home. Thus far, the majority of clients receiving services at TQIC presented with comorbid challenges including mental illness, substance abuse, and physical ailments necessitating wound care. The medical team at the TQIC consists of medical staff from the Hawai'i Homeless Healthcare Hui and the Department of Health under the leadership of a medical director from Hawai'i Health and Harm Reduction Center. Case management is provided by staff from the Institute for Human Services who ensure that each client can link to essential community supports. The City and County provides the facility and the Local 5 Union runs housekeeping and facilities management.



Acceleration of Hawai'i Coordinated Access Resource Entry System (CARES)

The behavioral health and homelessness system in Hawai'i has long needed a single, 24/7 call and referral center for individuals in need of mental health, addiction, crisis and support services. While a collaboration between the Department of Health and the University of Hawai'i launched in October 2019, the COVID-19 crisis accelerated the promotion and utilization of the CARES line as a primary resource to (1) help those in need of services and (2) triage people into the TQIC.

Provider Resources & Guidance

In a time of ever-changing state and federal guidelines, providers needed a centralized source of information to support the continuation of their essential services. Thus, the BHHSURG launched a government-hosted website consisting of resources on topics such as telehealth, billing, use of PPE, and serving clients suspected of having COVID-19. The website is updated weekly by a team of professionals and University of Hawai'i faculty and students who review local, federal and international guidance and condense the information into summaries, infographics and clinical decision trees. In addition, the BHHSURG holds weekly provider webinars (150-400 participants) aimed at training on important topics (e.g., intimate partner violence, child welfare issues, telehealth), obtaining updates from legislators, and holding question and answer sessions with BHHSURG leadership. Since the first webinar on March 23, all sessions were posted on the BHHSURG website. BHHSURG is currently working to obtain continuing education credits for attendees to encourage and expand ongoing participation. Next, the BHHSURG publishes a weekly newsletter, highlighting updates, provider heroes and clinical and administrative resources for stakeholders. Sign ups for the newsletter occur via the BHHSURG website. Finally, resources and new information are promoted on the BHHSURG's Instagram, Facebook and Twitter pages (@BHHSURG).

Resilience Hubs

The BHHSURG collaborated with non-profit and private organizations to obtain and distribute donations of homemade and store-bought PPE to essential providers statewide. More than 220 provider organizations have utilized the BHHSURG website as a portal for their support and supply requests. Three drop-off and distribution sites, or “Resilience Hubs,” opened on April 9, with similar plans for neighbor islands. BHHSURG partners developed operating procedures for the Hubs to enhance economies of scale and ensure infection control. Distribution of PPE began in phases on April 30 and as of May 17, 90% of provider agency requests were fulfilled and available for pick up. Though the Resilience Hubs have collected thousands of PPE and sanitation supplies, thousands more are needed to sustain services throughout the stay at home orders.

Ongoing Evaluation and Data-Based Decision Making

Each of the BHHSURG’s projects is informed by ongoing data collection, management and evaluation. The BHHSURG has created digital forms and dashboards for use by TQIC, CARES and Resilience Hub staff to track “live” information and make data-informed decisions for improvement.

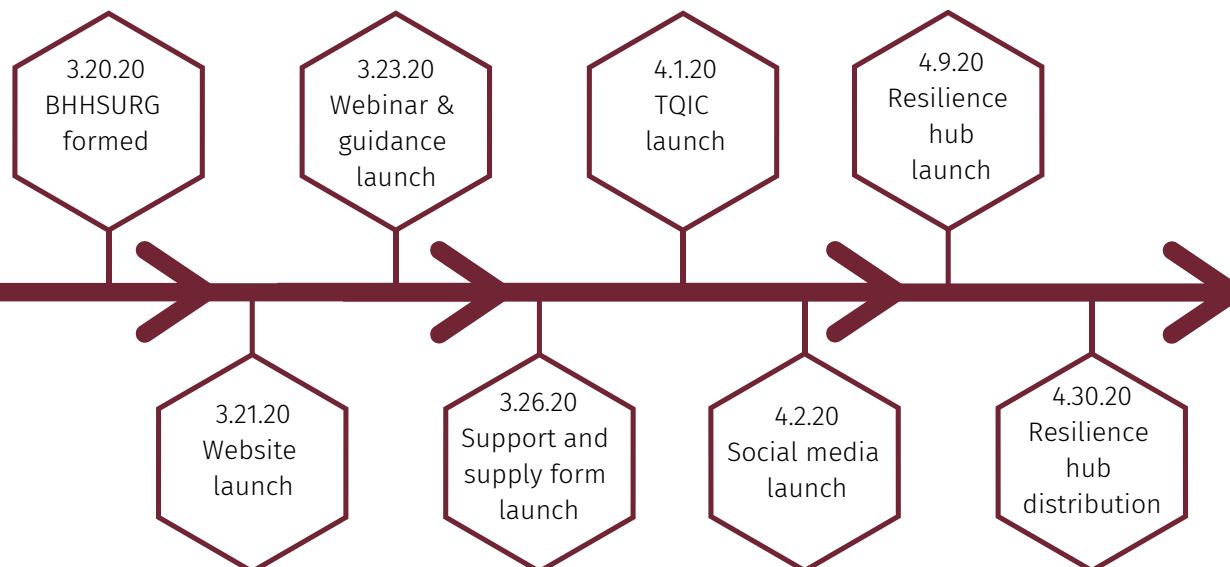
The Opportunity

COVID-19 has accelerated existing efforts to address behavioral health and homelessness needs through close partnerships between historically disconnected service sectors. The BHHSURG has rapidly evolved into a long-term collaboration that changes the face of our system and the nature of service delivery, with the goals of:

- A well-designed and client-focused, safety-net behavioral health system.
- A clear channel for efficient communication across system stakeholders.
- A more proactive and responsive relationship with the communities that we live, work and play in.

BHHSURG Development Timeline

Prior to the formation of the BHHSURG, efforts to link and sync the behavioral health and homelessness systems were already hapenning.



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