



Words to Deeds

From Silos to Solutions:

Cross System Implementation in California's Behavioral Health & Criminal Justice Reform Initiatives

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Los Angeles, California

The Power of Peers: Bridging Lived Experience into Forensic Behavioral Health

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Facilitator: Rayshell Chambers

Commissioner, Commission for Behavioral Health

Speaker Profiles





BEYOND THE RECORD

BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE BEHAVIORAL
HEALTH WORKFORCE BY EMPLOYING JUSTICE-
INVOLVED PEERS IN SUD RECOVERY

Lake County Behavioral Health Services

TODAY'S SPEAKERS

From data points to people, from records to lived realities. Each offers a distinct perspective shaped by experience, insight, and story.



Elise Jones
Director
Lake County Behavioral Health
Services



April Giambra
Deputy Director of Clinical
Services
Lake County Behavioral Health
Services

WHY IS PROVIDING JUSTICE INVOLVED PEER

SUPPORT SO IMPORTANT?

- Addressing workforce shortages
- Increasing recovery capital
- Reducing systemic hiring barriers



TURNING EXPERIENCE INTO PURPOSE

17 Felony Charges including:

- Possession of an illicit substance
- Possession for sales
- Transportation
- DUI
- Under the Influence
- Assault
- Battery
- Impersonating a police officer



Accomplishments:

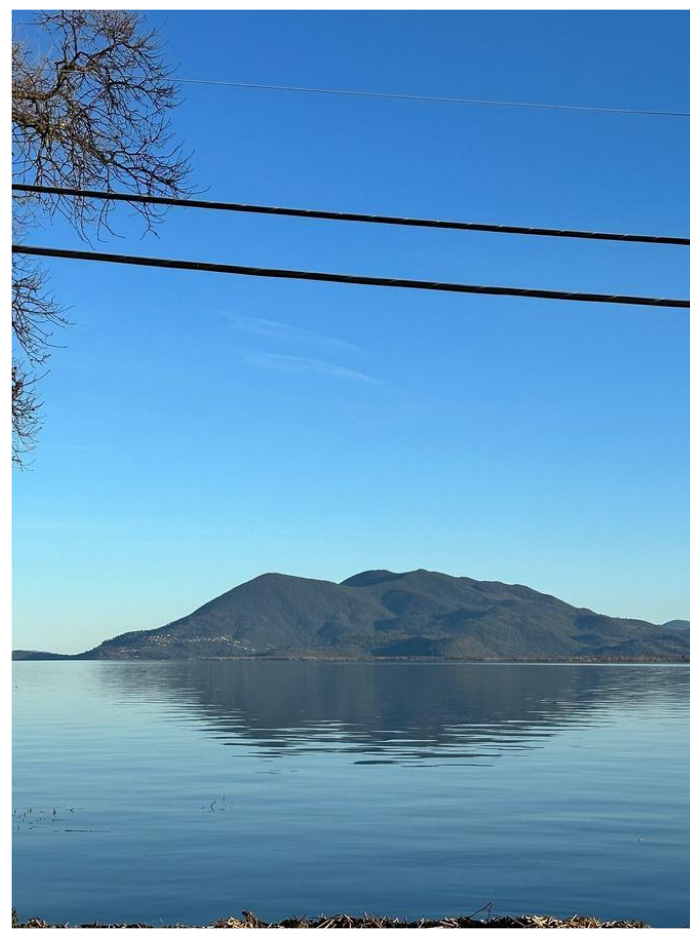
- In long-term recovery since 2009, after overcoming 20+ years of stimulant and opiate use
- Completed felony probation in 2011 and built a life rooted in purpose and recovery
- Certified Drug & Alcohol Counselor since 2013
- Bachelor of Arts in Psychology
- Master of Social Work
- Currently pursuing a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology
- Cervical cancer survivor
- Became a homeowner in 2021; resiliently rebuilt after loss in 2022
- Proud wife (married since 2014), mother of two, and grandmother of eight
- Transformed early experiences of childhood trauma and foster care into a life of integrity, compassion, and leadership
- Her greatest achievements: becoming a friend, a wife, a mother, a professional, and a valued member of her community

HIRING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BEST PRACTICES

The role of peer mentorship
and workplace inclusion

Transitioning skill sets

Building career pathways
beyond entry level roles



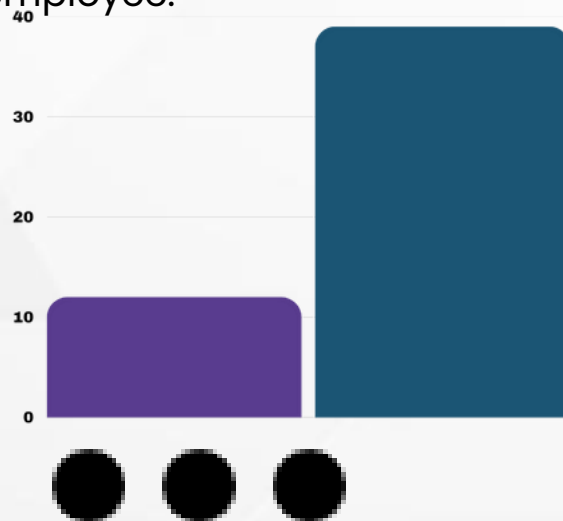
● Recruiting

● Onboarding

● Retention

IN PRACTICE

In a staff survey in the past year, 51 out of 110 people responded, and 12 of those responders identified as previously facing a felony criminal conviction. Individuals with a history of justice involvement are no more likely to face disciplinary issues than any other employee.





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