



From County Practice to State Priorities:

A Behavioral Health and Public Safety Roadmap
for California's Next Administration

2026 Convening Program

October 8-9, 2026
Oakland, CA



W2D: What to Expect

Convening Goals & Approach

The goal of Words to Deeds (W2D) is to convene thought leaders from California's state and county behavioral health and public safety departments to discuss implementation challenges and highlight solutions that prevent people with behavioral health (i.e., mental health and/or substance use disorder) needs from becoming involved with the criminal justice system.

By establishing peer-to-peer dialogue, we strive to establish the platform for increased relationship-building, learning, and continuous improvement across systems and jurisdictions that can help practitioners sustain more outcomes-focused and responsive services.

The expected discussion will be lively. Questions to consider include:

- What data/measurements from your program(s) have been most impactful?
- What are key takeaways/decisions made as a result of that information?
- What would you/your organization like to change, or want to have done or do differently?
- What does future success look like?
- What requests or resources do you need from your peers or state to be successful?
- What is the call to action for attendees?

Insights and action items from W2D will be useful to policymakers, service providers, and members of the public in understanding the benefits of and progress toward reducing criminal justice involvement for people with behavioral health needs, promoting the goal of prevention and early intervention.

We will submit a report to the state to enhance the future delivery of forensic behavioral health care and related services. The report will highlight recommendations and challenges prioritized during the conference by speakers and attendees.

Day 1 Agenda

9:00 a.m. Opening Remarks

- **Brenda Grealish** - Executive Director, Commission for Behavioral Health
- **Caroline Whistler** - Co-Founder and CEO, Third Sector

9:30 a.m. Session 1: *Prop 36 – Lessons Learned on Drug Offenses & Cross System Partnerships*

- **Facilitator: Doug Bond** - President & CEO, Amity Foundation
- **Kevin Walker** - Supervising Analyst, Judicial Council of CA
- **Shane Matthews** - Assistant Sheriff, Ventura County Sheriff's Department
- **Matthew Cate** - Secretary, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (retired) and Public Policy Advisor, Mosaic Solutions and Advocacy

10:50 a.m. Break

11:05 a.m. Session 2: *Forensic Full Service Partnerships Best Practices for Accelerating Reentry and Wellness*

- **Facilitator: Will Rhett** - Managing Director, Third Sector
- **Michelle Doty Cabrera** - Executive Director, County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California
- **Ana Gutierrez** - Manager, Government Partnerships & Policy, Redefine Alliance
- **Camilla Dohlman** - Director, Third Sector

12:25 p.m. Lunch, Awards Presentation & Program

2026 Paradigm Award Recipients

Presented by Bill Brown, Sheriff-Coroner, Santa Barbara County

- **County Champion: Ky Le on behalf of Santa Clara County** - Deputy County Executive, Santa Clara County Executive Office
- **State Champion: Michelle Doty Cabrera** - Executive Director, County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California
- **Lifetime Achievement: Tomiquia Moss** - Secretary, California Housing and Homelessness Agency

Lunch Plenary: How Can CA Counties Build & Sustain Public-Private Partnerships

Presented by Caroline Whistler - Co-Founder and CEO, Third Sector

- **Carla Javits** - Senior Advisor & Board Member, Redefine Alliance
- **Óscar Chávez** - President and CEO, Sonoma Community Foundation
- **Rob Gitin** - Consultant, Geeslin Family Fund
- **Chet Hewitt** - President and Chief Executive Officer, Sierra Health Foundation

1:55 p.m.

Session 3: *Alternative Emergency Response*

Scaling What Works to Sustain Mobile Crisis Programs in this Funding Environment

- **Facilitator: Tara Gamboa-Eastman** - Director of Government Affairs, Steinberg Institute
- **Amber Williams** - CEO, Janus of Santa Cruz
- **Jacob Rosen** - Managing Mental Health Clinician, Crisis Alternative Response of Eureka
- **Joe Graterol** - Community Paramedicine Medical Director, San Francisco Fire Department

3:00 p.m.

Break

3:10 p.m.

Session 4: *Supportive Housing – Creating Pathways to Meaningful Employment for Supportive Housing Residents and People Experiencing Homelessness*

- **Facilitator: Lewis Brown, Jr.** - Senior Policy Manager, California State Policy, Corporation for Supportive Housing
- **Crystal McMahon** - IPS Lead Implementation Specialist, California Center of Excellence / The IPS Employment Center
- **Jenn Oakley** - Lead Case Manager, Rising Sun Center for Opportunity
- **Rachel Herrmann** - Director of CalAIM, Episcopal Community Services
- **Sanford Pearlman** - Sr. Rehabilitation Counsel, Alameda County Behavioral Health
- **Shavia Johnson** - Health, Housing, and Integrated Services Program Manager, Lifelong Medical Care

4:10 p.m.

Closing Remarks

- **Oscar Benitez** - Managing Director, Third Sector
- **Brenda Grealish** - Executive Director, Commission for Behavioral Health

All Speaker Profiles & Biographies Available in the QR Code Below



Friday, October 9, 2026

Day 2 Agenda

9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Policy Convening on Next Steps in Integrating Behavioral Health and Housing

This convening will work toward greater collaboration and development of an advocacy platform for solving homelessness among people with behavioral health conditions. The convening is intended to leverage combined expertise to prepare for the change in state leadership coming in January 2027.

The convening will engage participants in focused conversations on

- Legislative and budget policy solutions to secure adequate funding for evidence-based services and housing programs;
- Administrative policy changes needed to strengthen guidance on the Behavioral Health Services Act, Transitional Rent, and other state and federal housing programs;
- An advocacy platform our diverse audience can support.
- The convening will include smaller work sessions focused on developing shared priorities to inform the next Administration and shape California's housing policy of tomorrow. In addition, subject-matter experts will frame the conversation on historic and the current landscape on state housing policy.

The policy convening is hosted by the California Mental Health Services Authority, Center for Budget & Policy Priorities, Corporation for Supportive Housing, the County Behavioral Health Directors Association, and the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

Words to Deeds recognizes leaders in public safety, mental health, and housing who champion efforts to end the criminalization of individuals with mental illness. Honorees are recognized for their efforts to support proven strategies that promote early intervention, access to effective and responsive treatments, a planned reentry, and/or the preservation of public safety. The Leadership Group nominates and votes for all honorees.

2026 County Champion: Ky Le – Deputy County Executive, on behalf of Santa Clara County

State Champion: Michelle Doty Cabrera – Executive Director, County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California

Lifetime Achievement: Tomiquia Moss – Secretary, California Housing and Homelessness Agency

2025 County Champion: Sarah Eberhardt-Rios – Director, Sutter County Health and Human Services

State Champion: Jim Mayer – Adjunct Professor, McGeorge School of Law

Lifetime Champion: David Panush – President, California Health Policy Strategies

2024 Community Champion: Rayshell Chambers – Executive Director, Painted Brain; Commissioner, Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission

County Champion: Luke Bergmann – Director of Behavioral Health Services, County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency

Law Enforcement Champion: Cherylynn Lee – Police Psychologist/Behavioral Science Unit Manager, Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office

State Champion: Toby Ewing – Executive Director, Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission

2022 Law Enforcement Champion: Lisa Heintz – Director of Legislation and Special Projects for the Federal Court Receiver, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

State Champion: Stephanie Welch – Deputy Secretary of Behavioral Health, California Health and Human Services Agency

Community Champion: Sandri Kramer – Director of Community Relations and Special Projects, Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services

2019 Law Enforcement Champion: Wendy Still – Chief Probation Officer, Alameda County

State Champion: Mark Grabau, PhD – Chief Psychologist, Forensic Services Division, California Department of State Hospitals

Judicial Champion: Honorable Eileen Moore – Associate Justice, California Court of Appeal

2018 Law Enforcement Champion: Charles Dempsey – Detective III, Officer-In-Charge of the Administrative Training Detail, Mental Evaluation Unit, Los Angeles Police Department

Judicial Champion: Honorable James Bianco – Site Judge, Los Angeles Superior Court Mental Health Court

Behavioral Health Champion: Kita Curry, PhD – Chief Executive Officer, Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services

2017 Law Enforcement Champion: Terri McDonald – Chief Probation Officer, Los Angeles County

State Champion: Tina Wooton – Manager, Santa Barbara County Department of Behavioral Wellness; Chair, California Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission

Lifetime Achievement: Charles Walters, PhD – Law Enforcement Consultant, Past Member-Council on Mentally Ill Offenders, Retired Assistant Sheriff, Orange County Sheriff-Coroner Department

2016 Law Enforcement Champion: George Gascon – District Attorney, San Francisco County

State Champion: Bill Brown – Sheriff-Coroner, Santa Barbara County

County Champion: Jackie Lacey – District Attorney, Los Angeles County

2015 Law Enforcement Champion: Senator Jim Beall – California State Senator

Judicial Champion: Judge Richard J. Loftus, Jr. – Santa Clara County Superior Court

County Champion: Jo Robinson, MFT – Director, San Francisco Department of Public Health, Behavioral Health Services

Behavioral Health Champion: Linda Boyd, RN, BSM, MN – Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, Emergency Outreach Bureau

2014 Law Enforcement Champion: Norm Hurst – Deputy Chief, San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department (Retired)

County Champion: Susan Adams – Marin County Supervisor

Behavioral Health Champion: Mark Refowitz – Director, Orange County Health Care Agency

Criminal Justice Champion: Lisa Rodriguez – San Diego County Assistant District Attorney

2013 Community Champion: Mark Gale – California Treatment Advocacy Coalition, Los Angeles

County Champion: Scott MacDonald – Santa Cruz County Probation Chief

Law Enforcement Champion: Curtis J. Hill – San Benito County Sheriff (Retired)

Lifetime Achievement: David Meyer, Esq. – Research Scholar, Institute of Psychiatry, Law and Behavioral Sciences, USC Keck School of Medicine

2013 Inaugural Paradigm Awards Event

Law Enforcement Champion: Tona Wakefield – Bringing Our Community Home, Santa Barbara

Judicial Champion: Judge Stephen V. Manley – Santa Clara County Superior Court

Law Enforcement Champion: Lee Baca – Los Angeles County Sheriff

County Champion: Jennifer Johnson – San Francisco County Deputy Public Defender

State Champion: Senator Darrell Steinberg – California State Senate President pro Tempore

Lifetime Achievement: Helen M. Thomson – Yolo County Board of Supervisors and Assembly District 8 Representative (Retired)

W2D Leadership Group

Our Mission

The leaders in criminal justice and behavioral health participating in this effort strive to end the criminalization of individuals with mental illness by supporting proven strategies that promote early intervention, access to effective treatments, a planned reentry, and the preservation of public safety.

Our Vision

A true shift in the paradigm between criminal justice and behavioral health will embody an effective jail diversion system that fosters a successful and ongoing exchange of information among courts, criminal justice agencies, mental health professions, governmental agencies, and nongovernmental organizations, to achieve a substantial positive change in the way individuals with mental illness are treated within our communities.

2026 Leadership Group

Deanna Adams – Senior Analyst, Judicial Council of California, Criminal Justice Services, Operations and Programs Division

Jenny Bayardo – Executive Officer, California Behavioral Health Council

Oscar Benitez – Managing Director of Diversion & Reentry, Third Sector

Ashley Breth – Assistant Deputy Director, Community Forensic Partnerships Division, Department of State Hospitals

Bill Brown – Sheriff-Coroner, Santa Barbara County

Michelle Doty Cabrera – Executive Director, County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California

Cathy Coyne – Government Affairs Liaison (Retired), California State Sheriffs' Association

Hallie Fader-Towe – Director of Justice & Health Initiatives, Behavioral Health, Council on State Governments Justice Center

Grace Ferguson – Executive Associate, Urban Counties of California

Marcus Galeste – Research Scientist, Commission for Behavioral Health

Brenda Grealish – Executive Director, Commission for Behavioral Health

Carmen Green – Executive Director, California State Sheriffs' Association

Nicole Green – Chair, Contra Costa County AB109 Community Advisory Board and Chair, Contra Costa County Council on Homelessness

Kathryn Jett – Senior Policy Consultant, Shatterproof

Karen Larsen – Chief Executive Officer, The Steinberg Institute

Stephen V. Manley – Superior Court Judge, Santa Clara County

W2D Leadership Group (continued)

Lahela Mattox – Chief Operations Officer, San Diego Regional Task Force on the Homeless

Rosie McCool – Deputy Director, Chief Probation Officers of California

David Meyer – Clinical Professor, Institute of Psychiatry, Law and Behavioral Sciences, USC Keck School of Medicine

Ryan Morimune – Legislative Advocate, Administration of Justice, California State Association of Counties

Kevin O'Connell – Research Consultant, O'Connell Research

Jolie Onodera – Senior Legislative Advocate, Health and Behavioral Health, California State Association of Counties

Mike Radford – Bureau Chief, Training Program Services Bureau, Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training

Stephanie Regular – Assistant Public Defender, Office of the Public Defender, Alameda County

Will Rhett – Managing Director of Behavioral Health, Third Sector

Tyler Rinde – Director of Government Affairs, California Psychological Association

Kiran Sahota – President, Concepts Forward Consulting

Albert M. Senella – President, California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives; President and Chief Executive Officer, Tarzana Treatment Centers, Inc.

Adrienne Shilton – Director of Public Policy and Strategy, The California Alliance of Child and Family Services

Jessica Headley Ternes – Behavioral Health Director, Third Sector

Linda Tomasello – Consultant, Crisis Intervention Training

Molly Willenbring – Consultant, Leadership Benefiting Nonprofit Organizations

Helene Zentner – Field Representative, California Board of State and Community Corrections

Carrie Zoller – Supervising Attorney, Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts



Words to Deeds is a statewide collaborative and California's premier forum for cross-sector leaders working at the intersection of criminal justice and behavioral health.

For more information on the annual convening, reports, and other resources, please visit www.wordstodeeds.org

