

**City of Alameda, California
SOCIAL SERVICE HUMAN RELATIONS BOARD
THURSDAY, JANUARY 23, 2025
APPROVED MINUTES**

1. CALL TO ORDER

President Scott Means called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Present: President Scott Means, Vice President Samantha Green Board Members Dianne Yamashiro-Omi, Bernie Wolf and Michelle Buchholz.

City staff: C'Mone Falls, Marcie Johnson, Grecia Mannah-Ayon, and Gabriella San Diego

2. NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENTS

Josh Altieri, Community Relations Manager, from the Housing Authority for the City of Alameda announced that the two biggest community development projects at North Housing Estuary 1 is over 60% completed. It is tracking for opening in July. The 45-unit building is going to be filled exclusively by the coordinated entry system from the county. Linnet Corner is also over 60% completed and is tracking for an early October opening. It has 64 units and will house seniors. Alameda Food Bank comes biweekly rotating between their two senior properties. Anne B. Diamant and Independence Plaza. The Alameda Food Bank is also providing water and snacks to their youth programs with ARPD, and share Wednesdays with Drawbridge, which provides arts and recreational activities for the youth at Esperanza. The Housing Authority is collaborating with ARPD to provide senior programming at Anne B. Diamant in November and Independence Plaza in December. The City of Alameda Zero Waste Program gave out recyclable totes and compost bins to encourage residents to reduce waste. There were over 18,000 applications for the housing waitlist for their housing choice voucher program. Finally, the City of Alameda Firefighter Toy Program had over 260 households participate, which was an 18% increase over 2023.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

3-A Review and Approve December 5, 2024 Draft Minutes

A motion to approve the December 5, 2024, minutes made by Board Member Michelle Buchholz and seconded by Vice President Samantha Green. Ayes: President Means, Vice President Green, Board Members Yamashiro-Omi, Buchholz, and Wolf. Nays: None. Abstained: Board Members Bryant and Pile. Motion passed 5-0-2.

4. AGENDA ITEMS

4-A Presentation on Mental Health and Loneliness in the City of Alameda

Todd Erickson and Elizabeth Dandenell presented their work as Be Well Alameda. The project was created from the Leadership Alameda Program. At the time, mental health had emerged as a high need in Alameda. There is an epidemic of loneliness, and a need to build resilience. They decided to interview various people in the community to get a

sense of what the needs are to start bringing people together to build a resilient community. Please see Exhibit 1.

Board Member Michelle Buchholz praised Todd and Elizabeth for being two community members who decided to take on this project and did it in a way that was professional and thoughtful. She also asked if there is a measurable outcome from something as broad as wellness.

Todd Erickson stated that there are ways to try and build that in through baseline surveys. Elizabeth Dandenell mentioned that they would love to collaborate with UC Berkeley and potentially collaborate on some studies, which Todd added they have had conversations with them already, and they are interested in supporting them.

Board Member Bernie Wolf brought up the correlation between loneliness and its impact on domestic violence.

Board Member Dianne Yamashiro-Omi asked if they did a scan of all the activities that currently occur on the island, particularly art-based activities because it is a great way to connect with people.

President Scott Means brought up the success of the porch concerts over the pandemic, and the reality that live music brings people together. He said that before the pandemic there were free concerts in Crab Cove, which were funded by the Rotary Club. The concerts would bring thousands of people together. He suggested that they try to bring those concerts back to bring together a wide cross-section of the community.

Board Member Buchholz brought up the reality of parents and caregivers, not being ok, and that should be something that should also be addressed by this project.

Board Member Buchholz asked if Be Well Alameda came back in a year to present what would they hope would come in the next phase of the project. Mr. Erickson stated that they would love to have a diverse Community Resiliency Stewardship Team meeting regularly and activating ways to bring people together. Elizabeth Dandenell added that they would love to have public awareness, social media, a website, coordinating work with various other groups, and potentially having interns helping with the work.

Public Comment – None

President Scott Means stated that the Be Well Alameda had six of the domains of age friendly cities, which demonstrates the alignment of the work of various groups.

Board Member Buchholz proposed Be Well Alameda works with the Alamedans United Against Hate Workgroup.

President Scott Means motioned to allow Lafayette, who wanted to make public comment, make his public comment. The motion was seconded by Board Member Buchholz. Lafayette was having technical difficulties and was not able to make public comment.

4-B CDBG Application Review Timeline and Expectations

Staff member Grecia Mannah-Ayon announced that the 2025 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) on January 16, 2025. She notified the Social Service Human Relations Board that they are being asked to participate in the decision-making process by scoring the submissions for the public service applicants. She went through the timeline of the CDBG process.

Vice President Samantha Green asked if the NOFA went out as a two-year grant period. Staff Member C'Mone Falls confirmed that it is a two year grant period.

President Means asked if a member of SSHRB is also a board member of one of the applicants are they allowed to recuse themselves from that application, and still score the rest of the applications. Staff Member C'Mone Falls stated that if a member of SSHRB has an interest in one of the applicants, they will need them to recuse themselves from scoring any of the applications. President Means stated that he will need to recuse himself from the CDBG Process.

Board Member Yamashiro-Omi asked about what level of involvement with any of the organizations constitutes the need to recuse oneself from the process. Staff Member C'Mone Falls stated that there will be a policy outlined.

Public Comment – None

4-C Social Service Human Relations Retreat Review

Staff Member Gabriella San Diego went over the detailed outline of the work that was accomplished during the Social Service Human Relations Board Retreat on December 5, 2024.

Board Member Yamashiro-Omi asked about making sure the work on the resolution is added to the work of Alamedans United Against Hate.

Public Comment – None

4-D Social Service Human Relations Board Workgroup Reports

Public Comment – None

- The Road Home/People Experiencing Homelessness (Means, Green, Buchholz):
 - Two members of the Dignity Village Advisory Board are willing to help with the work of The Road Home
 - President Means presented at the Commission on Disabilities for age friendly cities
- Alamedans Together Against Hate (Yamashiro-Omi, Bryant):
 - They have been discussing a possible speaker series and one person they would like to bring in is Kate Schatz who co-wrote Do The Work!
- Domestic Violence Task Force (Buchholz, Pile, Wolf):
 - The group did the bathroom campaign in December on Park and Webster Streets.
 - They connected with Hillary Larkin from Highland Hospital who has been working in the Domestic Violence work in Oakland for a long time and is

- interested in expanding and supporting Alameda.
- They are continuing to pursue getting domestic violence resources centralized, ideally on a website.

Staff Member C'Mone Falls announced that Board Member Cindy Pile has requested a leave of absence and that it is the decision of the Mayor to grant the request.

President Means would like to revisit to the idea of having a non-voting youth member on the Social Service Human Relations Board.

STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

Program Manager, Grecia Mannah-Ayon offered the following updates for Housing and Human Services (HHS):

- There were no items brought to council, and Staff Member C'Mone Falls announced that there will be three items brought to council in March.
- HHS is hiring two part-time Community Outreach Specialists one for street outreach and one for prevention.
- CDBG and HOME NOFA's have been released, and applications are due by February 13 @ 2pm.
- The City's Below Market Rate Home Ownership Waitlist remains open.
- Staff Member Grecia Mannah-Ayon will be staff support for the Social Service Relations Board, and Marcie Johnson will be cycling off.

Social Services Manager, Marcie Soslau Johnson offered the following updates for Housing and Human Services (HHS):

- HHS accepted a \$15,000 check from Senior Policy Advisor, Julie Yim, to support the Alameda Collaborative for Children, Youth, and their families (ACCYF).
- In collaboration with the ACCYF Youth Advisory Committee, All Good Living Foundation, Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency, and Operation Dignity, staff and youth distributed \$50 gift cards to all residents at Dignity Village, the largest homeless shelter on the island, on December 23, 2024.
- Beginning in October 2024, Snacks & Support provides art therapy, coffee, and refreshments for those experiencing homelessness. The program runs every third Wednesday of the month from 12 – 1:30pm.
- HHS is working with All Good Living Foundation and Alameda Boys & Girls Clubs to develop a cooking class for low-income teenagers.
- Marcie gave Lafayette's public comment on his behalf. Alameda Health Systems Mobile Health Services, beginning on February 19, they will be parked at the main library and continuing every third Wednesday of the month from 11:30am – 5:30pm.

5. BOARD COMMUNICATIONS, NON-AGENDA

President Scott Means announced that the Alameda Food Bank heard the presentation about age friendly cities and asked if there are ways to get funding from AARP, so they can support the work of age friendly cities.

6. ADJOURNMENT

President Means adjourned the meeting at 8:49 p.m.

Be Well Alameda

SSHRB Presentation 1/23/25

Agenda

Be Well Alameda Background

Aspiration

What We've Learned

Potential Areas for Taking Action

Going Forward

Discussion/Questions



Background

Leadership Alameda 2023 identified community mental health challenges

Public Awareness and Connection to Local Resources

Database (100 + local resources)

Website (searchable by need and demographic)

Broader Collaboration

Interviews, Summaries

How to organize and sustain ongoing coordination?



Aspiration

Be Well Alameda seeks to enhance mental health and build community resilience by cultivating a sustainable culture of connection and well-being among all community members in Alameda.



Who we interviewed

Pat Russi, Alameda Department of Parks and Recreation

Kyle Sinkoff, Alameda Family Services

Peggy Huber, Alameda Family Services

Marcie Johnson, The City of Alameda, Social Services Manager

Avani Patel, Greenway Golf Corica Park

Robin Wilson, Spiritual Healer & Consultant

Karen Zeltzer, Alameda Family Services

Dina Hondrogen, Rhythmix Culture Works

Michelle Buchholz, SSHRB Board Member

Doug Biggs, Alameda Point Collaborative



Overarching Themes

1. Rising Mental Health Concerns

- **Youth Mental Health Crisis:** Increasing rates of suicide and suicide ideation, especially among youth,
- **Impact of Anger and Trauma:** There is a noticeable increase in anger and trauma within the community, particularly among the youth, which exacerbates mental health challenges.

2. Social Isolation and Disconnection

- **Technology's Role in Isolation:** The pervasive use of technology and social media is contributing to a sense of disconnection, particularly among teens, leading to feelings of isolation and being misunderstood.
- **Diminished Social Structures:** Traditional social support systems, such as churches and social clubs, have weakened, leaving gaps in community connection and increasing reliance on social media.

Overarching Themes (cont)

3. Barriers to Effective Mental Health Support

- **Stigma and Cultural Divides:** Mental health stigma, particularly in certain cultural contexts, prevents individuals from seeking help. Additionally, racial, socioeconomic, and other divisions in the community hinder efforts to create a unified approach to mental health.
- **Systemic and Resource Limitations:** Challenges such as a lack of culturally competent care, limited access to therapy, overbooked clinicians, and insufficient funding create significant barriers to effective mental health support.

4. Youth Involvement and Development

- **Need for Youth Engagement:** There is a call for greater involvement of youth in identifying and addressing gaps in mental health services. Engaging young people is crucial for developing programs that resonate with their needs and encouraging their participation.
- **Lack of Life Skills and Opportunities:** The changing family model, reliance on technology, and lack of opportunities for independent play are seen as contributing to the challenges faced by young people in developing essential life skills.

Overarching Themes (cont)

5. Importance of Human Relationships and Community Engagement

- **Strengthening Community Bonds:** Building and maintaining human relationships are seen as essential to combating loneliness and isolation. Initiatives like porch concerts and community walks are examples of efforts to strengthen these bonds.
- **Need for Trust-Building:** Building trust within the community and between service providers and individuals is crucial for effective mental health interventions. Cross-sector collaboration can help create opportunities for trust-building and unstructured community engagement.

6. Cross-Sector Collaboration and Coordination

- **Holistic and Integrated Approaches:** There is a need for more coordinated & holistic approaches to addressing mental health, where different sectors work together rather than in silos.
- **Resource Sharing and Innovation:** Collaboration can lead to better resource sharing, development and expansion of partnerships, and innovative approaches to addressing mental health and isolation, such as eco therapy and creative community activities.

Overarching Themes (cont)

7. Outreach, Awareness, and Participation

- **Gaps in Outreach and Awareness:** There is a need for better communication and outreach to make people aware of available resources and encourage participation in community activities.
- **Underutilization of Outdoor Spaces:** Alameda's outdoor spaces represent an untapped resource that could play a significant role in enhancing community resilience and addressing mental health and isolation through greater engagement with nature.



Presentation of Findings Discussion

Pat Russi, Alameda Department of Parks and Recreation

Robin Wilson, Spiritual Healer & Consultant

Karen Zeltzer, Alameda Family Services

Dina Hondrogen, Rhythmix Cultural Works

Katherine Schwartz, Alameda Family Services

Karen Beckles, The Funky Truth Healing

Bella San Diego, ACCYF

Doug Biggs, Alameda Point Collaborative

Erika Falk, Mental Health Practitioner

Presentation of Findings Discussion Reflections

Community Connection Initiatives

- **Neighborhood Building:** Ideas like block parties, neighborhood toolkits, and events like "National Night Out" suggest a focus on strengthening local ties through neighborhood coordination.
- **Community Walks and Gatherings:** Initiatives like "The Bay Stroll" and supporting neighborhood activities highlight the value of in-person gatherings.

Promoting Positivity and Engagement

- **Campaigns and Challenges:** Initiatives like the "Smile Campaign" and neighborhood decoration contests, little libraries, art galleries, and gnomes aim to create a sense of joy and community spirit.
- **Positive Messaging:** Suggestions include using city flags and banners to share uplifting messages and promote mental wellness programs. Also, consider a consistent social media campaign such as #BeWell Alameda.

Presentation of Findings Discussion Reflections

Combating Loneliness and Isolation

- **Support and Engagement for Recovery Groups:** Expanding NA meetings and creating safe spaces for connection have been beneficial.
- **Involvement of Various Age Groups:** Ideas like intergenerational flash mobs emphasize the importance of multi-age participation to increase social bonds and teach social skills.
- **Youth Engagement:** Strategies to reduce screen time and foster real-life interaction are recommended, including online-to-physical event transitions.

Addressing Safety Concerns and Barriers

- **Fear of Crime:** The community's fear of crime impacts social interaction, suggesting a need for initiatives that build trust and ensure safety.
- **Barriers to Information Sharing:** Challenges like costly communication platforms (e.g., Peachjar) and difficulties in reaching families are noted.

Presentation of Findings Discussion Reflections

Building on Existing Resources and Infrastructure

- **Event Calendars and App:** Centralizing events and positive news through an app is proposed to enhance engagement and information dissemination.
- **SSHRB's Role:** Strengthening the Human Relations Board as a force for community efforts is emphasized.

Addressing Root Causes

- **Self-Connection and Empathy:** A recurring theme is the importance of self-awareness and empathy, as these are seen as foundational to overcoming social isolation.
- **Mindfulness and Meditation:** Integrating mindfulness into the health system could provide tools for community members to reconnect with themselves and others.

Presentation of Findings Discussion Reflections

Inclusivity and Equity

- **Socioeconomic Disparities:** Be mindful of and address class and racial divides through integrated housing and more equitable community planning.
- **Holistic Approaches:** Community efforts should consider the diverse experiences and needs of residents to foster unity and mutual support.

Areas of Organization and Action

Public awareness and access to resources

Neighborhood level strategies

Social media safety/education/responsible use

Promoting self-connection, mindfulness, empathy

Third space activation / events / groups

Reaching the hard to reach

Addressing systemic barriers



Going Forward

Establish partnerships and opportunities for funding and support

Build Be Well Alameda website (searchable access to resources, events, and support)

Begin public awareness campaign

Facilitate ongoing collaboration & action



Aspiration

Be Well Alameda seeks to enhance mental health and build community resilience by cultivating a sustainable culture of connection and well-being among all community members in Alameda.

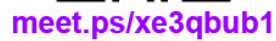
Aspiration

Be Well Alameda seeks to enhance mental health and build community resilience by cultivating a sustainable culture of connection and well-being among all community members in Alameda.



Your thoughts & questions

What's important to pay attention to as we move this effort forward?



Potential Outcomes of Start-up Phase

Establish structure, roles, budget, and governance for collaboration

Align around a compelling goal/aspiration

Identify critical shifts and leverage areas to achieve the goal

Begin to organize and support prototype initiative ideas

Identify needs for ongoing support

What keeps you up at night, or what concerns arise for you?

1. Rising Mental Health Concerns, Particularly Among Youth
2. Intensifying Anger and Emotional Disconnection
3. Social Media and Technology's Impact on Social Skills and Mental Health
4. Decline in Community Participation and Development of Life Skills
5. Concerns About the Unhoused Population and Socioeconomic Disparities
6. Disconnect from Self and Meaningful Connections
7. Cultural and Generational Shifts



What do you see as some major obstacles to effectively addressing mental health, loneliness, and isolation in Alameda?

1. Systemic and Structural Barriers
2. Social Divisions and Disparities
3. Distrust and Fear of Engagement
4. Impact of Technology and Changing Social Norms
5. Lack of Social and Community Spaces
6. Cultural and Societal Expectations
7. Lack of Community and Interpersonal Connections



What is not working in efforts to address mental health, loneliness, and isolation needs in Alameda?

1. Access and Availability of Services
2. Workforce and Systemic Limitations
3. Barriers to Communication and Information Sharing
4. Stigma and Lack of Engagement
5. Systemic Gaps and Coordination Issues
6. Pace of Modern Lifestyles and Societal Shifts



What efforts are you aware of that are successfully addressing the mental health, loneliness, & isolation issues in Alameda?

1. Community-Based Programs and Activities

- **Engagement Through Recreation and Open Spaces:** Programs like the Greenway Foundation at Corica Park use recreational activities (e.g., golf, healthy food programs) to encourage social interaction and outdoor engagement. Open spaces are seen as vital resources that provide non-commercial, welcoming environments.
- **Youth Engagement and Education Programs:** School-based health centers and youth advisory boards have been successful in creating platforms for youth to engage in health education and mental health services, with youth taking leadership roles.
- **Organized Community Events:** Events such as job fairs, game nights, and organized dances create opportunities for people to gather, connect, and participate in shared activities, fostering a sense of community.

2. Creative and Culturally Inclusive Approaches

- **Use of Arts and Music in Therapy:** Programs that incorporate different types of therapy, such as art and music, provide alternative ways for people to express themselves and address mental health needs, particularly for youth.
- **Culturally Specific Programs:** Initiatives like the Rhymix Cultural Center's PAL program and ICC's community connection programs that work closely with local leaders and culturally specific communities (e.g., faith-based groups) to build trust and provide support that resonates with those communities.

What efforts are you aware of that are successfully addressing the mental health, loneliness, & isolation issues in Alameda? (con't)

3. Increased Awareness and Advocacy

- **Heightened Awareness Around Mental Health Issues:** Organizations like ACCYF (Alameda Collaborative for Children, Youth, and Families) have played a key role in raising awareness about mental health and advocating for community spaces and services to support well-being.
- **LGBTQ+ Youth Center:** The establishment of the LGBTQ+ Youth Center addresses the need for a safe, affirming space for marginalized youth, highlighting the community's commitment to inclusivity and support.

4. Support Services for Vulnerable Populations

- **Peer Support and Community Services:** Programs such as the Peer Mental Health First Aid Program in schools and Meals on Wheels' Friendly Visitors Program provide tailored support for vulnerable populations, fostering a sense of belonging and reducing isolation.
- **Housing and Shelter Support Models:** Some housing models have integrated mental health support into their frameworks, providing comprehensive care that includes both shelter and emotional well-being.

What efforts are you aware of that are successfully addressing the mental health, loneliness, & isolation issues in Alameda? (con't)

5. Collaborative and Wraparound Services

- **School and Community Partnerships:** Partnerships with Alameda Unified School District (AUSD) and organizations like Alameda Family Services provide comprehensive wraparound services, connecting families and students to mental health and recreational resources.
- **Non-Emergency Support Initiatives:** Services like the non-emergency line in the fire department offer follow-up support after incidents, showing a commitment to ongoing care and community safety.

6. Effective Use of Existing Infrastructure

- **Parks and Recreation:** The city's Parks and Recreation department, along with the library, is recognized for creating well-run, inclusive community programs. Events like the Weekend Family Bike Ride, organized in collaboration with local businesses and the fire department, promote health and community involvement.

What gaps do you see in current efforts to address mental health, loneliness, and isolation in Alameda at this time?

1. Lack of Consistent, Centralized Support for Adults
2. Insufficient Staffing and Workforce Challenges
3. Funding and Resource Limitations
4. Insufficient Focus on Public Awareness and Outreach
5. Gaps in Support for Specific Populations
6. Underutilization of Outdoor and Community Spaces
7. Challenges with Health Care Integration
8. Barriers in Coordinated Care and Support Systems



What role could cross-sector collaboration play in helping the community better address the mental health, loneliness, and isolation needs in Alameda?

1. Improving Accessibility and Awareness of Existing Programs
2. Breaking Down Silos and Encouraging Holistic Collaboration
3. Addressing Duplication and Overlapping Services
4. Creating New Opportunities for Unstructured and Preventive Engagement
5. Leveraging Community-Based and Neighborhood-Level Connections
6. Creating Funding and Support for Collaborative Initiatives
7. Early Intervention and Low-Barrier Support Systems
8. Focus on Connection and Community Building, Not Just Mental Health
9. Formation of a Community Resiliency Task Force

