

# The Interfaith Community Services Behavioral Health Workforce Center of Excellence

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*Insights and Lessons Learned from Two Years of Implementation*

June 26, 2025



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# Welcome



**Jennette Shay**, Chief  
Operating Officer, Price  
Philanthropies

# Agenda

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- Part 1** | Overview of the Interfaith Center of Excellence
- Part 2** | 5 Design Decisions and Lessons Learned
- Part 3** | Q&A and Discussion
- Part 4** | Updates on the \$75M ELEVATE Behavioral Health Workforce Fund
- Part 5** | Closing Remarks from the **Honorable Terra Lawson-Remer**, County Board Chair and Supervisor, District 3
- Part 6** | Networking

# Building a Community Behavioral Health Workforce Center of Excellence

Insights and Lessons Learned from Interfaith Community Service's Talent Initiative in North San Diego County

JUNE 2025



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community services

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## Section 3: Expanding Pathways into ICS

The first major push of the COE has been focused on expanding internships and associate clinician positions (e.g., ASWs, AMFTs). In 2022 and prior to the COE starting up, ICS hosted 30 interns and associate clinicians from addiction studies programs, Master of Social Work programs, occupational therapy programs, and nursing programs. In 2023, the first full year of COE operations, this number ballooned to 189 interns. In 2024, ICS hosted 147 interns, an almost 600% increase in just two years.

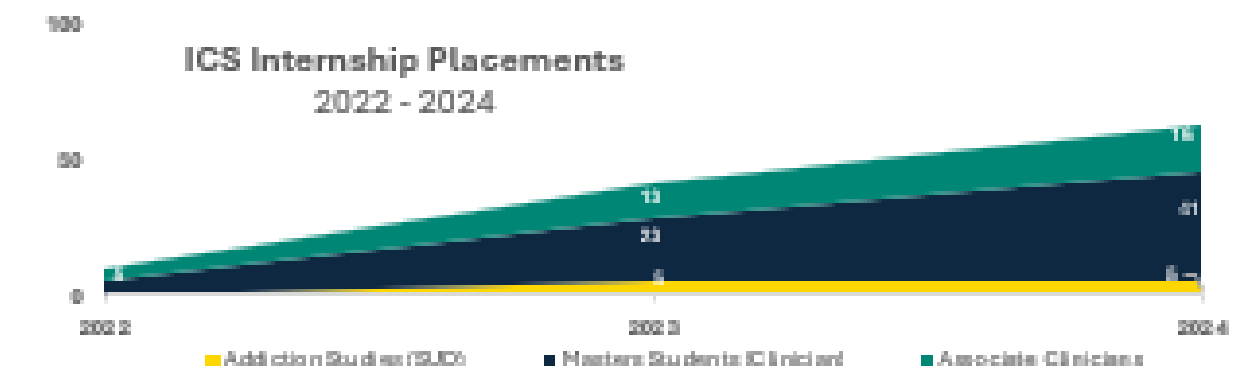
“ The goal is to become THE PLACE to go for an internship if you are student in San Diego interested in a career in community behavioral health. We want to build a brand and reputation among colleges, universities, and students that we offer a real learning experience with dedicated supervisors and field placement coordinators. Its starting to work.

— Marlene Romo, BH Workforce Program Manager

### 3.1: Attracting Addiction Counseling and Clinician Interns

ICS is investing in providing new entrants into behavioral health fields with a high-quality learning experience, all with the goal of converting these individuals to work with ICS as W-2 employees after they complete their education requirements. The focus for ICS is on Registered and Certified SUD Counselors, Associate Social Workers, Licensed Clinical Social Workers, Associate Marriage and Family Therapists/Professional Counselors, and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists/Professional Counselors. In 2022, the baseline year before the COE began, ICS hosted a total of 10 of these interns and associates. In 2023 and 2024, that number grew to 41 and 62 respectively.

Exhibit 11: ICS Clinician and SUD Counselor Intern and Associate Pipeline, 2022 - 2024







# An Overview from **Greg Anglea**, Chief Executive Officer, Interfaith Community Services

# What is the COE?

Beginning in 2023, Interfaith launched a series of programs and partnerships to a) create **better on-ramps** into behavioral health for new entrants b) expand tuition assistance and **internal advancement opportunities** for current staff and c) provide behavioral health **professional development** across the organization.

## Goal #1:

Reduce time to hire

## Goal #2:

Increase retention

## Goal #3:

Increase workforce diversity,  
linguistic competency, and  
lived experience

## Target Occupations

1. Peer Support Specialists
2. Substance User Disorder (SUD) Counselors
3. Master's Level Clinicians (Social Workers, Therapists, Professional Counselors)
4. Other unlicensed, front line behavioral health roles (e.g., case manager, outreach specialist)
5. Nursing
6. Occupational Therapy

## Strategy A

### **Build better on-ramps into the behavioral health field**

By expanding internship and practicum opportunities, expanding apprenticeships, reevaluating hiring practices, and supporting entry-level training opportunities, the COE aims to create more inclusive, accessible, affordable, and supportive opportunities for students and candidates to work at ICS.

## Strategy B

### **Invest in advancement opportunities for current staff**

Expanding tuition assistance and scholarship programs, along with providing accommodating work schedules for employees to attend school, the COE is focused on helping employees take significant jumps in their education and earnings while employed at ICS.

## Strategy C

### **Commit to learning and domain expertise across the organization**

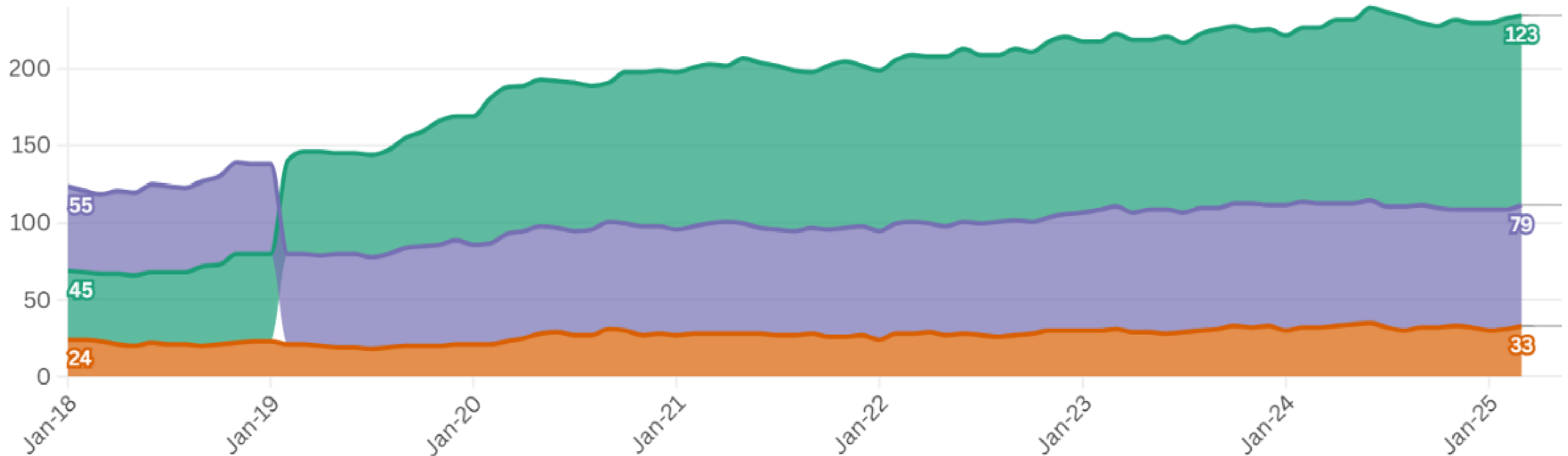
This involves developing and delivering curriculum across the agency related to mental health first aid, crisis prevention, de-escalation, trauma-informed care, cultural competency and humility, and self-care for employees, among other topics. This effort is aimed at reducing burnout while equipping staff and programs to deliver services with fidelity.

Interfaith employed 45 behavioral health client services FTEs in 2018. Today, there are 123 on the payroll.

## Interfaith Active Employees, by Month

2018-2025

BH Client Services Other Client Services Support and Operations



Source: Trailhead Analysis of Interfaith Payroll Data, Provided April 1, 2025 •

**Note 1:** Regular FTEs represent 91% - 95% from 2018 - 2025, with the remainder being regular part time or temporary staff.



## In 2022 (before COE)

## In 2024 (Year 2 of COE)

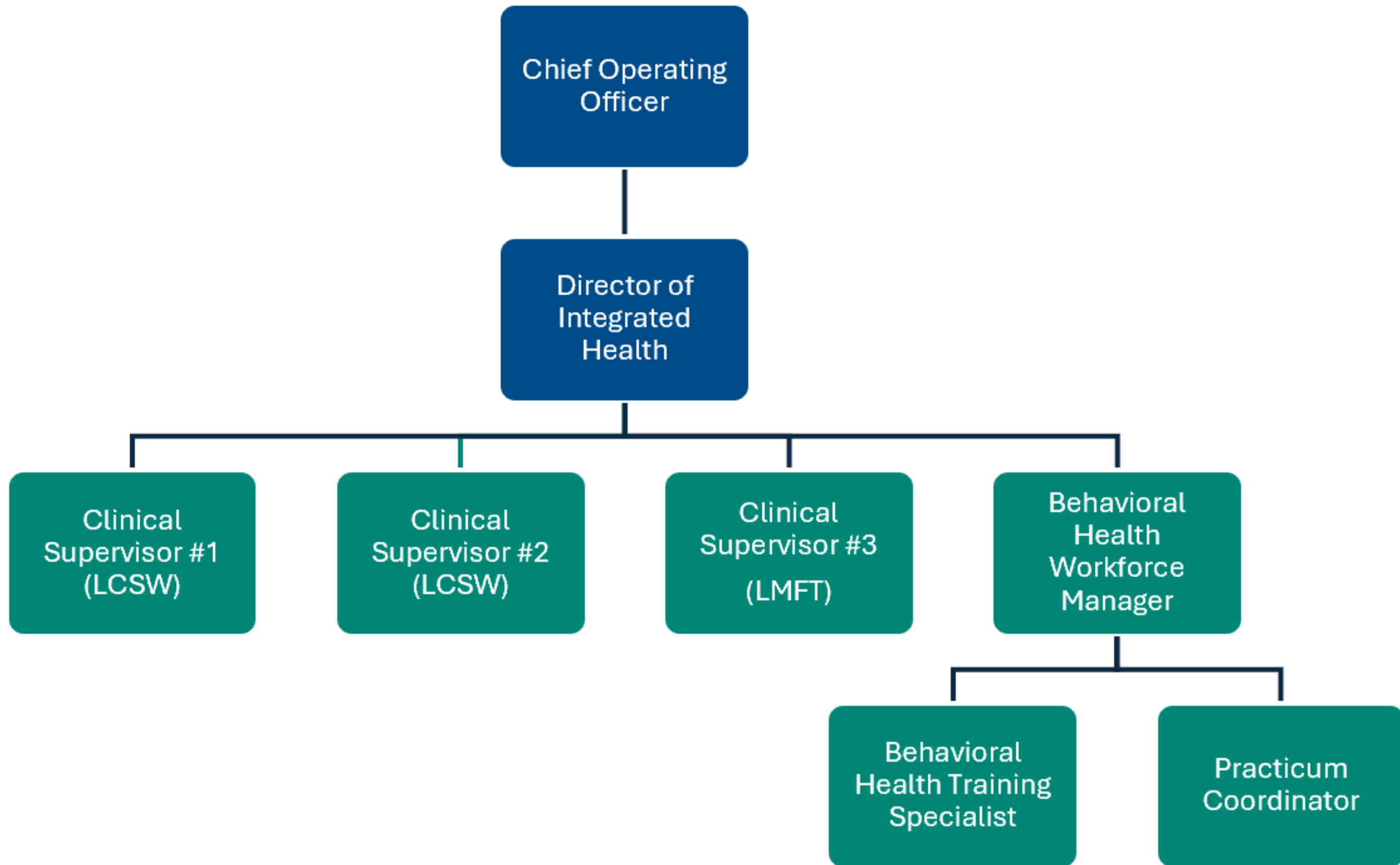
- No dedicated clinical supervisors
- **5** associate clinicians received supervision hours
- **5** masters students in social work and therapy, **10** nursing students, and **10** occupational therapy student completed internships at ICS
- **0** employees receiving tuition assistance for BH specific training through formal ICS program
- No centrally coordinated professional development strategy to onboard, support, and provide evidenced-based practices to staff.

- **3 FTE** Licensed Clinicians providing supervision
- **16** associate clinicians received supervision hours
- **41** masters' students in social work and therapy, programs, **51** nursing students, and **34** occupational therapy students completed internships at ICS
- **16** employees received up to \$40K per year to attend MSW an program
- **11** employees receive tuition assistance to attend addiction studies course on pathway to certified SUD counselor.
- **215** staff members and interns attended tailored trainings on crisis intervention, de-escalation, self-care, vicarious trauma, supporting different client populations, and more.

# Major milestones



# STAFFING THE COE





# The Interfaith Community Services Behavioral Health Workforce Center of Excellence – Meet the Team

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# Design Decisions & Lessons Learned

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**Filipa Rios**

Chief Operating Officer  
Interfaith Community Services



**Marlene Romo**

Behavioral Health Workforce Manager  
Interfaith Community Services



**Rivian Anderson**

Practicum Coordinator  
Interfaith Community Services

**Facilitator**



**Andy Hall**

President & CEO,  
Trailhead Strategies



# ELEVATE Behavioral Health Workforce Fund



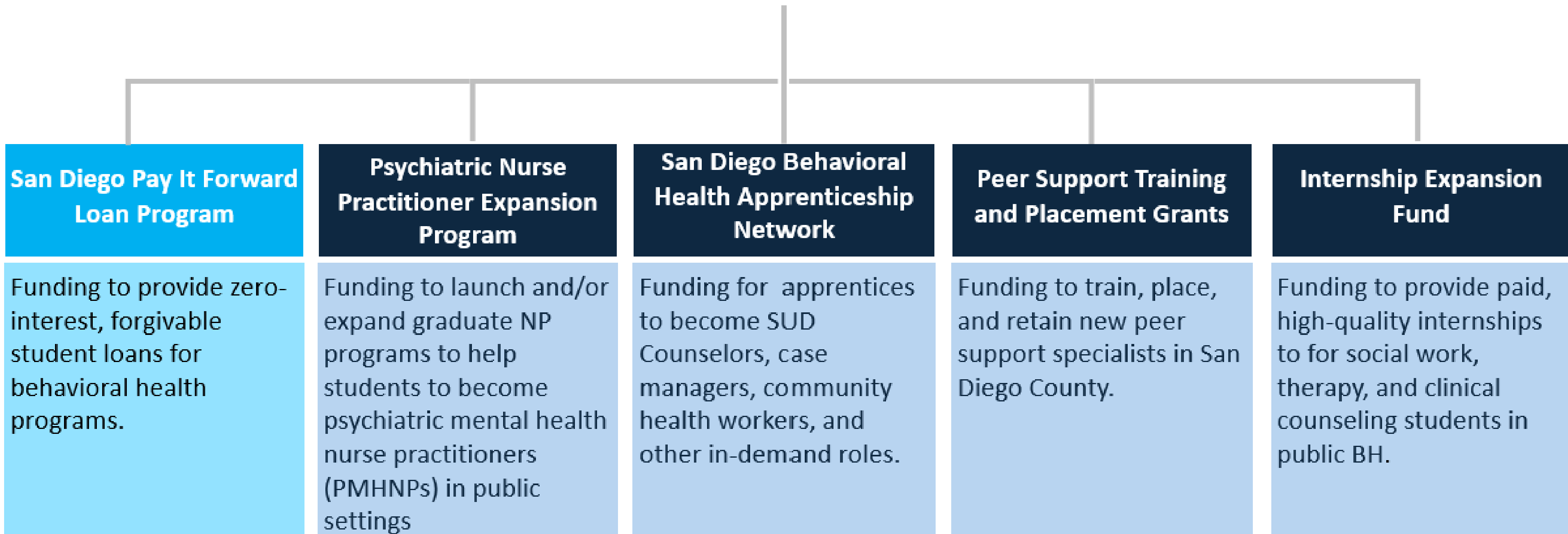
**Nadia Privara**, Acting Director, Behavioral Health Services, County of San Diego



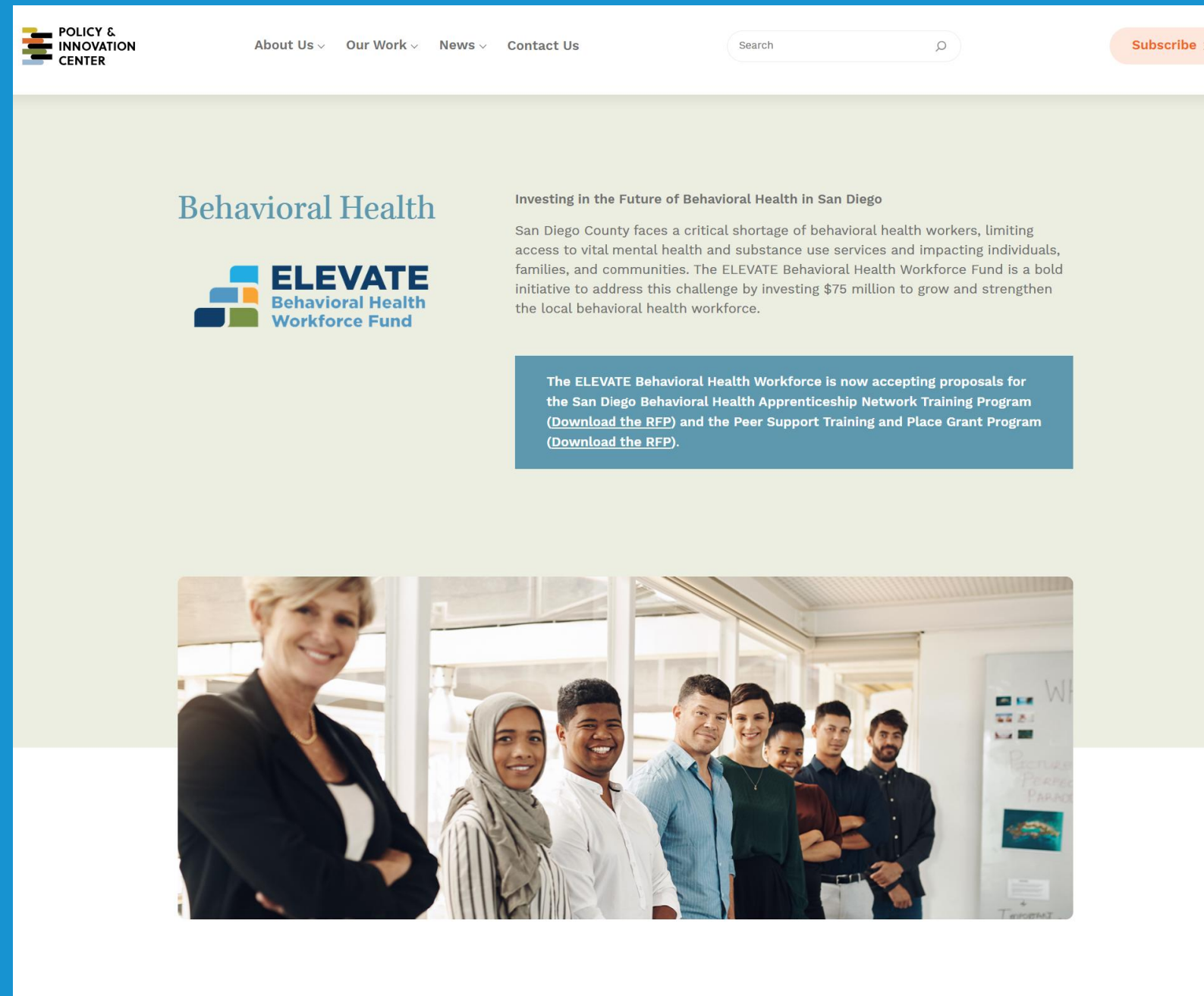
**Stephanie Gioia-Beckman**, Senior Director, Workforce & Community Impact, Policy and Innovation Center

# Evolution of the BH Workforce Initiative





# Engagement Opportunities



[www.ThinkPIC.org/ELEVATE](http://www.ThinkPIC.org/ELEVATE)

Training RFPs

SD Pay It Forward  
Education Partner

ELEVATE Eligible  
Employer List

Monthly Learning  
Sessions

Subscribe

# Closing Remarks



**Honorable Terra Lawson-Remer**, San Diego County Board Chair & Supervisor, District 3



# Thanks for Coming!

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