

July 2025 Newsletter

Peninsula Behavioral Health's mission is to provide quality comprehensive behavioral health services to the residents of our community.



CEO Wendy Sisk Advocates in Washington DC

During the last week of June, Peninsula Behavioral Health CEO Wendy Sisk visited Washington, D.C. to advocate directly with federal policymakers about proposed federal Medicaid reductions outlined in HR1.

Sisk emphasized that community behavioral health clinics like PBH, which rely on Medicaid for roughly 85% of funding, operate on narrow margins and lack access to more diversified payor sources. Additional cuts could result in reduced services, staffing, and access—particularly in rural areas.

With demand for behavioral health care increasing, Sisk urged lawmakers to preserve vital Medicaid funding that supports prevention, treatment, and recovery across Washington and beyond.



Honoring Independence & Caring for Ourselves: *A 4th of July Message from PBH*

As Independence Day approaches, Peninsula Behavioral Health wishes our community a joyful and meaningful holiday. Our offices will be closed Friday, July 4th, so staff can enjoy time with loved ones. We'll reopen Monday, July 7th.

While fireworks are a cherished tradition, we recognize they can be distressing for individuals with PTSD, anxiety, or sensory sensitivities. Sudden loud noises may trigger flashbacks, panic, or deep unease—especially in residential areas. If you or someone you love finds this season stressful, here are a few grounding strategies to help create calm:

- Plan ahead to avoid surprises
- Use noise-canceling tools or soothing sounds
- Practice deep breathing or grounding exercises
- Stick to routines and avoid substances
- Reach out for support—you're not alone

This Independence Day, celebrate freedom in all its forms—including the freedom to care for your mental health. Whether loud or low-key, do what brings you peace.



PBH Program Spotlight: Clearing the Way: *Meet the Care Navigation Team!*

At Peninsula Behavioral Health (PBH), the Care Navigation team is often the first connection someone makes on their mental health journey — offering compassion, clarity, and connection from the very beginning.

Making Access Simple and Supportive:

Serving over 3,500 people annually, PBH's Access team handles walk-ins, phone calls, and referrals with care and efficiency. They manage intake appointments, paperwork, and referrals, removing barriers so clients can begin receiving mental health and substance use services quickly.

Open Access Program:

Mental Health Same-Day Intakes

- Port Angeles: Wed–Fri (1–1.5 hours)
- Sequim: Wednesday (1–1.5 hours)

Substance Use Assessments

- Tues & Wed at 8:00 AM (2 hours)

Beyond Logistics: Care Navigation in Action:

Care Navigators go beyond coordination. Trained in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), they help clients build life skills, navigate systems like housing and benefits, and run supportive groups including:

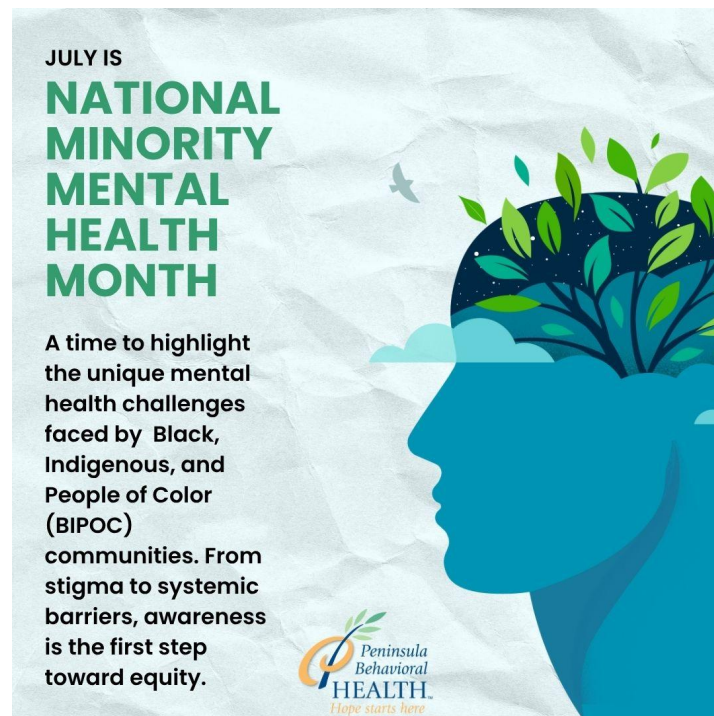
- Wellness Management
- Mindfulness
- Mending Mindsets

Meet the Team Behind the Care:

- Nancy Bowman, Supervisor: 20+ years in youth mental health, passionate about helping people feel seen and heard.
- Kathy Hansen, Referral Specialist: 15-year PBH veteran guiding clients

through intakes and referrals.

- Shelly Johnson, Referral Specialist: 18 years at PBH, valued for her knowledge and steady presence.
- Kyle Nervik, Mental Health Professional: Conducts most intakes; recently licensed and tech-savvy support lead.
- Samantha Rodahl, Care Navigator: Musician and advocate with a creative, client-centered approach.
- Emily Fosnes, Care Navigator: MHA graduate focused on equity in rural healthcare.
- Mikayla DeBerry, Care Navigator: Intersectionality expert with a detail-driven, inclusive approach to care.



July is National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month *Promoting Equality, Empowerment, and Whole-Person Wellness for All*

A powerful reminder that mental health is for everyone—yet barriers persist for many in Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and marginalized communities, especially in rural areas like the Olympic Peninsula.

Founded in honor of advocate Bebe Moore Campbell, this month highlights challenges like:

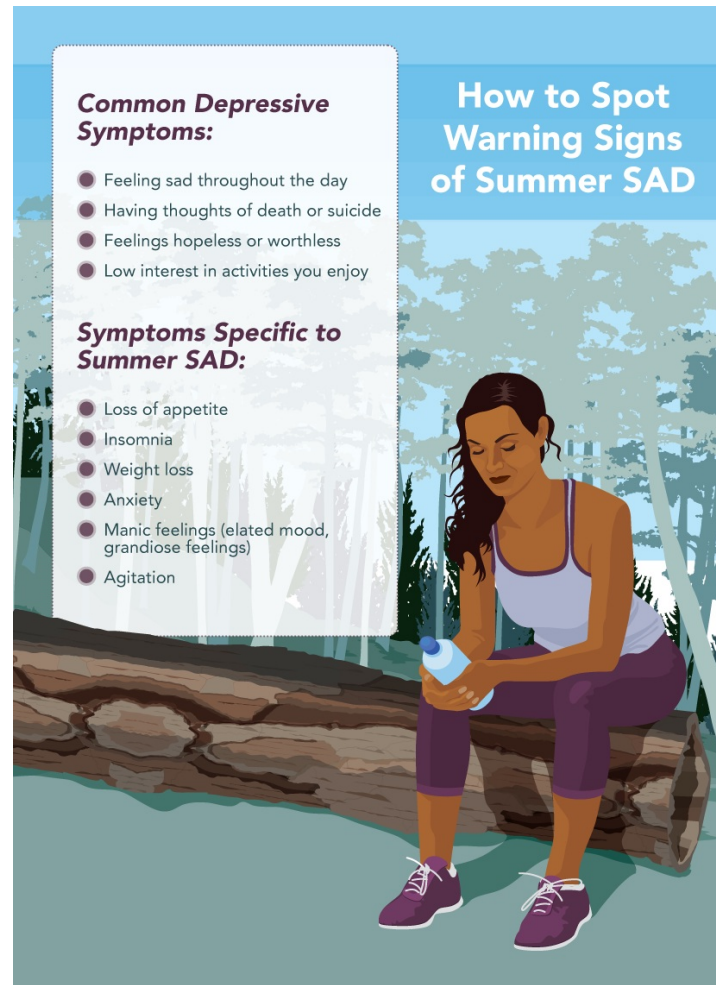
- Lack of culturally competent care
- Stigma and language barriers
- Systemic inequities and limited local resources

At Peninsula Behavioral Health, we provide inclusive, trauma-informed care for all. Our efforts include:

- Staff training in equity and bias
- Hiring diverse staff and peer specialists
- Bilingual services and partnerships with tribal and BIPOC-led groups

How You Can Support:

- Support: Listen, advocate, share resources, and fight stigma
- Self-Care: Seek culturally informed support, practice compassion, and reclaim joy



Seasonal Affective Disorder in Summer! (Yes, It Exists!)

While most people associate Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) with winter, Summer SAD is a lesser-known but real form of seasonal depression. For some, the heat, long days, and social pressures of summer can lead to:

- Insomnia and poor appetite
- Anxiety or irritability
- Restlessness and trouble focusing
- Withdrawal from social activities

Why It Happens:

Disrupted sleep from long daylight hours, heat-related discomfort, and pressure to enjoy summer can all contribute. Biological changes in serotonin and melatonin may also play a role.

What Helps:

- Stick to a routine
- Stay cool and limit overstimulation
- Take breaks from social media
- Reach out for support
- Be kind to yourself—it's okay not to love summer

At Peninsula Behavioral Health, we know mental health challenges can show

up any time of year. If you're struggling, we're here to help—with therapy, medication support, and a listening ear. You're not alone, and support is just a call away.



Miles of Smiles!

PBH at the North Olympic Discovery Marathon

For the 6th year running, Peninsula Behavioral Health proudly sponsored the NODM Relay—but this time, we didn't just cheer from the sidelines. We laced up our sneakers and hit the trail with two amazing PBH walking teams!

Covering 26.2 miles as a team, each of our 10 walkers took on a leg of the scenic Olympic Discovery Trail, celebrating wellness, teamwork, and community spirit.

Meet the Teams:

- Serotonin Squad: Breanna K., Kathy S., Alicia W., Paige F., Andrew F.
- Healing in Motion: Ashlee R., Tracy S., Regan A., Heather M., Kelly C.
- And MVP Support: Elizabeth B.—our behind-the-scenes transportation hero!

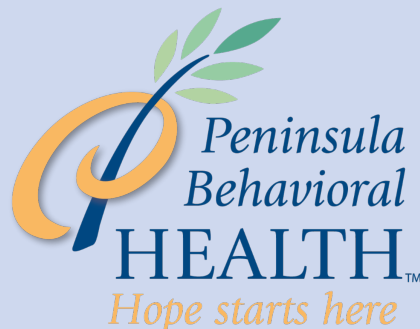
We're so proud of our staff for promoting whole-person wellness and showing up for the community—on and off the clock.



How Can YOU Help Support PBH and Make a Difference in our Community?

- Talk openly about mental health.
- Be conscious of your language.
- Encourage equality in how people perceive physical illness and mental illness.
- Show empathy and compassion for those living with a mental health condition.
- Push back against the way people who live with mental illness are portrayed in the media.
- Advocate for mental health reform.
- Make a one-time, monthly or annual donation to PBH to **support** our mission of providing quality comprehensive behavioral health services to the residents of our community!

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