

Uplift Family Services, Pacific Clinics Merger Expands Access

Two of California's leading nonprofit community-based behavioral health care providers, Pacific Clinics and Uplift Family Services, recently announced their merger under the name Pacific Clinics. Bringing together more than 150 years of experience and with a dedicated team of 2,000 employees serving Californians across 17 counties, it will be among the largest community-based nonprofit providers in the state.

Kathryn McCarthy will assume the position of chief executive officer/president of the merged Pacific Clinics, a role she held at Uplift Family Services. James J. Balla, who served as Pacific Clinics' chief executive officer, will continue his distinguished executive leadership role as chief strategy officer.

"This merger will broaden Pacific Clinics' reach throughout California at a moment when mental and behavioral health needs have never been more acute and widespread," McCarthy said. "Combining expertise and commitment to care enables us to strengthen services, expand capacity to innovate and provide better outcomes for more Californians, from the youngest children to older adults."

Pacific Clinics offers a full range of mental and behavioral health services, foster care and social services, housing, continuing adult education and early childhood education programs. Its unmatched continuity of care



Kathryn McCarthy

provides life-changing services to children, individuals, older adults and families.

"Together, we have combined the two best-in-class community-based providers who are now one," Balla said. "We will be able to leverage our collective knowledge and expertise to ensure that more Californians have access to services."

The expanded reach of Pacific Clinics continues to be critical in the COVID-19 era when mental health needs have grown, especially for communities of color, and services can be more challenging to access. In 2021, nearly half of adults in California (46%) reported symptoms of anxiety or depression, and 22% of adults were not able to get counseling or therapy. Two-thirds of Califor-

nians aged 12-17 who have depression did not receive any care in the past year. Pacific Clinics has already expanded access to mental health services through its telehealth systems and will extend its reach even further through the merger.

This expansion will enable Pacific Clinics to fill a critical gap in providing access to mental health services to all Californians, with a broad range of quality services offered to qualifying individuals and families. Of the 1.5 million adults in California who did not receive needed mental health care in the last year, 35% did not do so because of cost.

"California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies congratulates member agencies Pacific Clinics and Up-



James Balla

lift Family Services on their partnership, expanding their reach of critical behavioral health care," said Le Ondra Clark Harvey, chief executive officer of California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies. "California and the nation are at a crossroads. Together, we can meet the behavioral health needs of communities coping with the impacts of COVID-19 and the inequities in our system of care. CBHA is committed to helping our members navigate a rapidly changing environment and strengthening our behavioral health system."

"The California Alliance commends Uplift Family Services and Pacific Clinics for this historic merger that will meet the growing needs of children, youth and families in California," added Chief

Executive Officer Christine Stoner-Mertz, LCSW. "We look forward to supporting this merged member organization in their tremendous work throughout the state, with an emphasis on addressing our most underserved Californians."

Along with delivering a comprehensive range of services, Pacific Clinics has long been a strong voice for behavioral health care providers and clients statewide. Since 2020, Pacific Clinics and Uplift Family Services have partnered to jointly operate one of the state's first certified community behavioral health clinics, a national model for integrated behavioral and physical health care.

"This merger brings together two innovative, community-driven organizations that have always put the needs of those we serve first, and we will continue to do so," said Chief Operating Officer Shawn M. Caracoza, LCSW. "Our current clients will not experience any change in services they are already using and will have expanded access to more services and providers."

Uplift Family Services has operated since 1867, providing innovative wraparound services through a trauma-informed approach to individualized care. Established in 1926, Pacific Clinics has adapted its core strengths-based mental health treatments and educational programs with specialized services and sensitivities for diverse cultures and populations.

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