

21 Oct 2021

San Francisco Board of Supervisors  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
City Hall, Room 244  
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

Dear Members of the Board,

My name is Heather Evans. I serve Fresno County and am a former patient of Kaiser's Behavioral Health Department (KBH) here. I understand you are reviewing their policies and procedures for mental health care in your jurisdiction, and I believe my experience is germane to your inquiries.

I live with a chronic traumatic stress disorder. I have received care for it at multiple stages of my adult life. Due to the nature of the disorder, even successful therapeutic collaborations will not inoculate me from flare-ups. Effective courses of treatment have all involved weekly individual sessions with a therapist for 12-36 months. The routine nature of the appointments is necessary for me to develop and maintain a bond with the therapist. I have been seen by practitioners in New Mexico, New York, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and California.

Such a flare-up occurred in the spring of 2018. I contacted KBH reporting a return of dissociative episodes. It took a month to receive an initial appointment. At the end of the assessment, the therapist announced that she was very good at her job, and thus in high demand and would squeeze me in when next she could. Sometimes it would be ten days away, sometimes it would be three weeks away. In five months, having little reduction in aggravating symptoms, I requested a change of therapists. However, the new therapist also struggled to accommodate even biweekly meetings. After an especially distressed complaint I left on her phone, she went out of her way to try and make that happen. We were able to meet at least on the same day for about four months, during which I made the sort of progress I was used to seeing in care. That was when she marked my PTSD resolved and I was dropped to monthly visits. I was unaware of the diagnosis resolution, so it took me another four months to realize that this would be the new normal. When she recommended I join a therapy class I felt was inappropriate to my needs, I ended our relationship and sought care outside KBH. She was surprised when I told her.

The first six months with Kaiser prolonged my crisis period. The final four resurfaced the most damaging beliefs about my traumas, and added weight to them because their evidence was coming from my mental health provider. I wondered whether I'd been misdiagnosed before, or that maybe the thing that was wrong with me was that I felt like something was wrong. I was just malingering; I should just get over it.

Kaiser showed itself to be structurally incapable of meeting my mental health needs. I do not believe they can adequately care for anyone addressing severe trauma because they are unwilling to authorize the human labor it requires. I urge you to drop them from your employee benefit plan.

Kind Regards,

Heather Evans, MA, MLIS  
Fresno, CA 93722

**From:** [Carroll, John \(BOS\)](#)  
**To:** [John Avalos; Board of Supervisors. \(BOS\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Hsieh, Frances \(BOS\); Chan, Connie \(BOS\)](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Kaiser experience - File No. 210971 - GAO Meeting October 21, 2021  
**Date:** Thursday, October 21, 2021 11:05:00 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Thank you for your message, Mr. Avalos.

I am adding this message to the file for this matter, and by copy of this email to the [board.of.supervisors@sfgov.org](mailto:board.of.supervisors@sfgov.org) email address, it will be forwarded to the entire membership of the Board of Supervisors for their information.

Best to you,

**John Carroll**  
**Assistant Clerk**

Board of Supervisors  
San Francisco City Hall, Room 244  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 554-4445

**(VIRTUAL APPOINTMENTS)** To schedule a virtual meeting with me (on Microsoft Teams), please ask and I can answer your questions in real time.

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**From:** John Avalos <[javalos@nuhw.org](mailto:javalos@nuhw.org)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 21, 2021 11:02 AM  
**To:** Hsieh, Frances (BOS) <[frances.hsieh@sfgov.org](mailto:frances.hsieh@sfgov.org)>; Chan, Connie (BOS) <[connie.chan@sfgov.org](mailto:connie.chan@sfgov.org)>;

Carroll, John (BOS) <john.carroll@sfgov.org>

**Cc:** Nate Horrell <nhorrell@nuhw.org>; Hernandez, Melissa G (BOS)  
<melissa.g.hernandez@sfgov.org>

**Subject:** Fwd: Kaiser experience

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Hi John,

I'd like to submit this email for the record for Item #2 on today's Oct 21, GAO hearing:

[Hearing - Kaiser Permanente - Behavioral Health Services]

Sponsor: Chan

Hearing regarding the availability of behavioral health services provided by Kaiser Permanente in the San Francisco Bay Area and California, including, but not limited to, patient wait times for initial appointments, length of wait time between visits, efficacy of telehealth medicine, and access to follow up care; and requesting the Health Service System to report.

Best,

**JOHN AVALOS, MSW**

Assistant Director of Political and Community Organizing  
National Union of Healthcare Workers

[javalos@nuhw.org](mailto:javalos@nuhw.org)

Phone: 415-359-8367

Pronouns: He/Him/His

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **katie cugno** <[katiecugno@gmail.com](mailto:katiecugno@gmail.com)>

Date: Thu, Oct 21, 2021 at 10:36 AM

Subject: Kaiser experience

To: <[javalos@nuhw.org](mailto:javalos@nuhw.org)>

Hi John, I just saw the email from the union; I lost my position at CCSF after spring 2020, and recently lost the healthcare through Kaiser that the union had been able to extend to those laid off during the pandemic at first. My experience was from the time during which I was still insured. I am not able to call in for comment, but if it's useful, see my responses to the questions posed below.

Thanks and good luck,

Katie

*Kaiser claims that patients can get non-urgent mental health appointments within the ten business day legal standard.*

- Is that your experience?-- **No.**
- How long have you had to wait to get mental health care from Kaiser?-- **I waited multiple weeks for a call back for intake, then more weeks for a list of 6 or 7 potential providers that I had to call in order to see if they had availability, none of whom did even though I called as soon as I received those contacts.**
- How have difficulties accessing care impacted your recovery, or treatment? your community? your job or family? **Substantially. It is exponentially more difficult for someone who desperately needs mental health care to receive it if it is so difficult to get started in the first place. It seems not only illogical but also unethical to require someone in need of mental health services to have to work so hard to get it, or wait so long.**
- Have you had difficulty navigating the intake and assessment process for mental health care? **Not so much as getting actual care for the diagnosis.**
- Have difficulties led you to give up seeking care from Kaiser or seek care elsewhere? **Yes, I gave up, and I do not have the means to seek care elsewhere.**
- Have you or anyone you know sought mental health care from city-funded services even though you are a Kaiser member? **No.**