

Honoring Black Contributions to Behavioral Health: Mildred Mitchell-Bateman, M.D.

Dear Colleagues,

As you know, February is Black History Month! Throughout American History, Black contributions to all facets of society have been marginalized or outright dismissed, and the contributions and achievements of Black individuals to behavioral health are no exception.

In honor of those contributions and the Black psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, doctors, nurses, community leaders, and activists who dedicated their lives to behavioral health and allowed us the opportunity to continue their critical work, each week in February, CBHA will recognize Black pioneers of behavioral health.

The Black behavioral health pioneer CBHA would like to recognize this week is Mildred Mitchell-Bateman, M.D.



Mildred Mitchell was born in Brunswick, Georgia, in 1922, the daughter of a minister and a registered nurse. She attended Barber-Scotia College in Concord, North Carolina, from 1937 to 1939 and graduated from Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte in 1941. She received an M.D. from the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1946.

Mildred Mitchell began her career in 1947 at Lakin State Hospital, which at the time was West Virginia's mental health hospital for black patients. [1] Mitchell married a Lakin therapist William L. Bateman of Parkersburg, on Christmas Day, 1947.

Mildred later left Lakin to practice medicine privately and study psychiatry. After a three-year stint at the Menninger School of Psychiatry in Topeka, Kansas, she returned to Lakin as the hospital's clinical director in 1955. Three years later, she was promoted to superintendent of the hospital. In 1960, Mildred Mitchell-Bateman was named supervisor of professional services for the state Department of Mental Health. In July 1962, the department's director Charles A. Zeller died, and Mildred Mitchell-Bateman was named acting director. [2]

On December 17, 1962, Governor Wallace "Wally" Barron named her Department of Mental Health director, the first African-American woman to lead a West Virginia state agency. She served in that capacity for fifteen years.

Mildred Mitchell-Bateman advocated placing mentally ill patients at facilities nearest their homes and developing community mental health centers. She developed a program entitled "Breaking the Disability Cycle," which gave hope to patients previously labeled untreatable. Mitchell-Bateman stated, "No one has a right to decide that patients aren't going to get any better." In 1973, she became the first black woman to serve as vice president of the American Psychiatric Association. Four years later, she was one of four psychiatrists on the President's Commission on Mental Health, which resulted in the Mental Health Systems Act being passed in 1980. [3]

In 1977, Governor Jay Rockefeller merged the Department of Mental Health into the larger Department of Health. Mildred Mitchell-Bateman resigned as director and became chair of the Psychiatry Department of Marshall University's medical school on July 1, appointed by then-President Jimmy Carter.

Mitchell-Bateman continued to practice medicine until her death at age 89 on January 25, 2012.

CBHA is honored to continue the work of Mildred Mitchell-Bateman, M.D., as we advocate for public policy initiatives that create system change and equity in behavioral health for diverse communities across California.

In that vein, CBHA is excited to announce our **2022 Policy Platform!** Please see the announcement below to learn more and reach out to CBHA staff with any questions or concerns.



Le Ondra Clark Harvey, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer

CBHA's 2022 Policy Platform

CBHA is excited to announce the release of our **2022 Policy Platform!** Thank you to all the members of our Policy Committee for their critical contributions.

The California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies (CBHA) is a statewide association of mental health and substance use disorder non-profit community agencies. We believe that Californians deserve a comprehensive, community-based behavioral health system that is adequately funded. We value outcome-based, data-driven, and culturally responsive approaches to service provision. We work strategically and collaboratively to pursue public policy initiatives that address disparities within the healthcare system and create system change for communities across our state. We support the integration of behavioral health, physical health, housing, education, and vocational rehabilitation services for children, youth, adults, and older adults regardless of their insurance status.



California Council of Community
Behavioral Health Agencies

Our Policy Platform provides a snapshot of policy areas that impact the operations of our eclectic member agencies. Click the button below to review **CBHA's 2022 Policy Platform!**

CBHA's 2022 Policy
Platform

*We appreciate UST, long-time **Affinity Member**, for their partnerships that both provide our members exceptional services and sponsor our advocacy efforts.*



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