



**Experience your hybrid workforce, secured.** [Learn how](#)

# Bucklew Programs offers crisis support for North Bay residents



SLIDE 1 OF 2  
Chris Kughn, CEO of Bucklew Programs, photographed in his Novato office on Friday Feb. 5, 2022. (Photo by John Burgess/The Press Democrat)

**MATT VILLANO**  
FOR THE PRESS DEMOCRAT  
February 21, 2022



Order Article Reprint

If you ever find yourself hopeless, if you ever feel irreparably despondent, if you ever get to the point where you're contemplating ending it all, rest assured that counselors affiliated with [Bucklew Programs](#) have your back.

These specially trained mental health professionals are the ones who answer the phone when you call the suicide crisis hotline from anywhere in the North Bay.

The hotline offers 24/7, free and confidential crisis support for callers having thoughts of suicide, as well as friends and family worried about loved ones who may be experiencing suicidal ideation. Bucklew also supports the community at large by helping those with mental health issues who may or may not be considering suicide.

### Bucklew Programs

Bucklew Programs is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Bucklew Programs' mission is to promote recovery, resilience and hope by providing behavioral health and support services that enhance quality of life.

**Location:** 2300 Northpoint Pkwy, Santa Rosa

**If you need help:** 1-855-587-6373 or [bucklew.org/services/suicide-prevention](http://bucklew.org/services/suicide-prevention)

**More information:** [bucklew.org/services/sonoma-county](http://bucklew.org/services/sonoma-county)

**Where to donate:** [bucklew.org/get-involved/donate/ways-to-donate](http://bucklew.org/get-involved/donate/ways-to-donate)

**KAISER PERMANENTE**  
HEALTH CARE THAT FITS YOUR LIFE [LEARN MORE](#)

- MOST POPULAR**
- 1 Why Amazon could open in Napa Valley in 15 months but scrapped Sonoma project
  - 2 Yountville winery changes hands
  - 3 Sonoma County city purchasing stalled downtown transit center project site
  - 4 Here are this year's 'Ones to Watch' young professionals
  - 5 Sonoma County airport expanding concessions as passenger volume jumps

**NBBJ Events & Nominations**

- MAY 3 Wine Industry Conference**  
Hyatt Regency Sono... | Santa Rosa, CA
- JUN 15 Pride Business Leadership Awards**  
Luther Burbank Cen... | Santa Rosa, CA
- JUN 23 Influential Women Awards Celebrat...**  
Petaluma Woman's C... | Petaluma, CA

📅	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON
	20	21	22	23	24	25

[🔍 See all events](#) [➕ Add your event](#)

In short, the work saves dozens of lives each month, and hundreds of lives a year.

These are a small fraction of the services the organization provides, according to executive director Chris Kughn. When Buckelew isn't providing services directly, the organization helps manage treatment or serves as a liaison between other agencies that can.

"We receive individual referrals from county behavioral health departments and provide A-to-Z support," Kughn said. "Basically, we exist to make life easier for these people and their families."

The nonprofit's operating budget for 2021-2022 is around \$16.2 million.

## Services help take care of the community

Buckelew Programs provides so many different services for adults and children in the North Bay.

Some of the services include managing supported housing and employment for people living with mental illness, supporting family members of those with mental health challenges, providing outpatient counseling, administering substance use treatment, conducting outreach, spearheading education, and, of course, offering suicide prevention.

As Kughn explained it, the organization also operates a 10-bed crisis residential facility.

Perhaps the biggest news in recent months has been Buckelew's involvement with inRESPONSE, the multiinstitutional program designed to treat mental health incidents like medical crises, not criminal ones. The program went live January 11.

The inRESPONSE team is comprised of the Santa Rosa Police and fire departments, the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) (NAMI), [Catholic Charities](#), [Humanidad Therapy & Education Services](#), and [Sonoma County Behavioral Health](#) that respond to emergency calls with a mental-health-first approach.

Buckelew works to coordinate them all and oversees a team that can respond to incidents immediately for 10 hours a day, seven days a week. It also provides "system navigators" to follow-up with people and their families to make sure they receive assistance, care and wraparound services following a call.

John Cregan, captain in the [Special Services Division](#) at SRPD, said these services disrupt what insiders call a "cycle of psychosis" that usually ends with individuals in repeated distress.

In some cases, these services involve escorting individuals to appointments and meetings.

"So far community support has been positive — they are excited to see non-police response to mental health crises," said Cregan, who has sat on the board of the local NAMI chapter for years. "Even our name — inRESPONSE — shows we're trying to do a better job of giving the community what it needs. This is a step on the road to serving the community better, and Buckelew plays a key role."

## Expanding across the North Bay

Buckelew began in 1970 as Buckelew Farms, Marin County's first community-based 24-hour facility serving area residents with a mental illness.

At the time, people who were diagnosed with mental illness were placed out of county, where loved ones and family members couldn't visit them.

Remote placements also made it difficult for patients to integrate into the community.

By opening a local facility for residents, Buckelew sought to change the dynamic, and it did. Over the next 30 years, the program quickly outgrew its homebase and expanded its coverage area into Sonoma and Napa counties.

In 2011, Buckelew added the [Helen Vine Recovery Center](#) to its continuum of services. The following year, FSA Marin merged with Buckelew, creating one of the largest behavioral health organizations in the North Bay, and established a full and integrated continuum of mental health and addiction treatment.

### BREAKING NEWS ALERTS

Receive immediate notice of major local breaking news events.

Subscribe Now

[Read our Privacy Policy](#)

### North Bay business events

WED 20	<b>Marketing Committee Meeting</b> Clearlake City Cou...   Clearlake, CA
THU 21	<b>Executive Board</b> Bay Area Metro Cen...   San Francisco, CA
THU 21	<b>ISC2 North Bay Chapter Monthly M...</b> Microsoft Teams   Santa Rosa, CA
THU 21	<b>The Current State of Great Power C...</b> <a href="https://www.isc2-n...">https://www.isc2-n...</a>   Santa Rosa, CA
THU 21	<b>POWER Executive Committee</b> Bay Area Metro Cen...   San Francisco, CA
THU 21	<b>Business After Hours RIVER TERRA...</b> River Terrace Inn   Napa, CA
THU 21	<b>McEvoy Ranch Outlet Open in Down...</b> McEvoy Ranch Wareh...   Petaluma, CA

	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON
	20	21	22	23	24	25

[See all events](#) [Add your event](#)

Today Buckelew has offices across the North Bay, and works in Marin, Sonoma and Napa counties. The organization also manages some services in Mendocino and Lake counties.

“Our evolution over time is rooted in our belief that people can and do recover from mental health and substance abuse challenges,” Kughn said. “So long as there are people in need, we will do what we can to help them.”

## Continuing the mission through partnerships

One of the ways Buckelew provides the services it offers is by partnering with other social work organizations in the community.

These partnerships are on full display through the trailblazing inRESPONSE program. Most of these services are delivered in English, but as part of that effort Buckelew works with Humanidad to employ a counselor who is tasked to provide wraparound efforts to Spanish-speaking families as well.

Another example of how these relationships can work is the partnership Buckelew has with [West County Community Services](#) to provide support to those county residents who live west of Guerneville and east of Jenner.

Christy Davila, director of counseling and behavioral health, said Buckelew regularly feeds people into WCCS' Peer Education and Training Program, a 180-hour course completed over three months.

Once a “peer” completes the class, that person begins work on 80 hours of internship to become a peer-certified counselor — an unpaid position that pays out in experience, kindness and karma. These counselors go on to other jobs in the region, where they expand the network of service and help.

“It’s hard to find placements, and although this is an unpaid internship, it is a great opportunity and support to the recent graduates to have a place to practice the skills they have learned through the class,” said Davila, who noted WCCS has had three interns in the last three years. “It certainly helps them find a paid position.”

## Breaking stigma around mental health

Looking forward, Buckelew will continue doing what it does best: Helping people.

Because the inRESPONSE program is so new, Kughn said it will remain a primary focus for most of this year. Cregan, with the police department, noted that the program expects to have two crews on call for 15 hours a day by the end of May, and three crews offering 24-hour coverage by the end of the year.

Kughn said he is optimistic that as mental health becomes a larger and less stigmatized part of healthcare overall, Buckelew’s role will become even more important.

“People are talking about mental health in ways they’ve never discussed it before — that openness and acknowledgement can only lead to greater response,” he said. “The innovative nature of the North Bay, the resiliency of the community, and the willingness of our partners to come together give me hope for seeing our communities get healthier and thrive.”

Buckelew also will host a big fundraiser on May 14. The event, dubbed Bike4Buckelew, aims to highlight and bring awareness to Buckelew’s work across the region. The bash comprises a series of fitness challenges at Miwok Meadows and China Camp in Marin County; all registered attendees are welcome to attend a post-trail party in the woods. For more information, visit [Buckelew.org](#).