

Summary

Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Ongoing Planning Council

June 18, 2020
9:00am
Teleconference

Present:

Fernando Granados, Sharon Jones, Monica Adrian, Wendy Campbell, Alyssa Castro, Vong Chang, Jose Chavez-Diaz, Jacqui Coulter, Caitlin Haygood, Heydi Herrera, Robert Hubbard, Cindy Mattox, Marilyn Mochel, Ismael Munoz, Jenna Nunes, Maria Orozco, Nancy Reding, Steve Roussos, Ralph Siva Rodriguez, Anna Santos, Jennifer Susskind, Ye Thao, Genevieve Valentine, Griselda Vasquez, Tatiana Vizcaino, Eli Sachse, Ker Thao, Elizabeth Casarez, Sia Vue, Shana Her, Betty Hoskins

Presentation and Discussion:

All Members

I. Call to Order / Roll Call

II. Approval of Minutes

The approval of minutes for May 21, 2020 was motioned/seconded (Nancy Reding /Jenna Nunes) and carried.

III. Update Planning Council Contact List

Fernando Granados, Chair, encouraged all attendees to email Maria Orozco stating their names to track call participation.

IV. Notice to the Public

Eli Sachse expressed his excitement about Merced Lao's upcoming presentation. He mentioned that overall they have been in contact with advocates at Access California, who are helping them advocate for their issues regarding MHSA funding. Access California has informed them that it is the public's rights to have access to the information about the requests for funding and the process and implementation of programs for MHSA. Eli shared from his experience, that the information has been blocked; LGBTQ Alliance put in a request for public records and received it now after a year. It seems to him that community involvement has been blocked for a year and is saddened by this. Eli is really hopeful for this presentation from Merced Lao Family, as he really wants to be proven wrong and informed that there is robust community collaboration and LGBTQ community member involvement in the implementation of this plan.

V. Chair's Report

No report.

VI. Director's Report

Genevieve greeted everyone, as this was her first formal meeting with the council and was very happy to participate. Genevieve informed that she has some updates for everyone in order to be transparent on where we're going, especially since this will be kicking off a lot of the three year planning for the next MHSA plan. She announced that as of right now, for the next three years, MHSA will be having a reduction in funding by 22 percent. As we go through the MHSA planning, Genevieve wants everyone to be really mindful on the integration of MHSA within the community rather than working on enhancing or building new programming. A 22 percent reduction in funds in MHSA, which was off the presses yesterday afternoon from the state, is pretty significant cuts in funding sources. Sharon Jones, Jacqui Coulter, and Genevieve have started trying to figure out ways to really be mindful of the current economic system, how COVID-19 has really impacted behavioral health, how it impacted the community as a whole, and how we can really become a beacon of hope for the community while educating the community on the significant revenue cuts. Genevieve shared that 22 percent is the minimum of what our fiscal cuts are going to be in terms of MHSA over the next three years. Once final budgets come through with the governor's office in September, they are anticipating those cuts anywhere from 25 to 35 percent. Genevieve shared that we are preparing within our own department roughly at 25 percent and already running some of those numbers. Genevieve wants to be transparent as we move forward in terms of planning for MHSA and how we start

launching the three year plan that everyone is aware of the restraints that BHRS is going to be under in terms of revenue.

Monica Adrian, Merced County Office of Education Caring Kids Program, asked if it is time to use the prudent reserve. Genevieve responded that it could be, but it is one of the last things they would like to do at this point. They don't know how long this crisis and pandemic is going to last and want to be mindful of a second wave that may occur; the state is looking at how prudent reserves can be used. However, they have not made an official decision on if they are going to be opening up prudent reserve for extended periods of time. A lot of letters and information have been sent to the governor's office and other representatives on different ways to potentially open up how we use our MHSA funding, and being able to really look at prevention and early Intervention and CSS differently. However, no final decisions have been made from a legislative perspective. They are looking at every option possible and are up to hearing feedback on different things, especially as Sharon talks more about what they're hoping to do for the three year plan, the evaluation of the three year plan, and being mindful fiscally. The biggest thing that Genevieve wants everyone to know and understand is that we need to be an agency that is a beacon of hope for the community but also need to be trauma-focused, culturally humble, client centered, and fiscally responsible. She noted that if we are not fiscally responsible we can't actually produce all the services that we need to be. Genevieve added that she is definitely going to need everyone, all of their feedback, and support so that all of the resources our consumers need can really be provided as a community.

Fernando Granados, Sierra Vista Child & Family Services, appreciates the transparency in providing that information. He knows that Sharon will be soliciting feedback from this group, and asked Genevieve what type of feedback she is looking for. He asked if she will be looking for feedback on when it comes to making cuts and where the cuts are going to happen. Genevieve responded that the biggest thing she is going to need from this group is their top two priorities for the next three years that they want to make sure are retained, and need to be centered around or on. She said that everybody has needs and desires and there's never enough money, people, or time to get it all done, but she really needs this group to focus on the top two priorities. She clarified that it does not necessarily mean programs, but more of priorities. When they start the three year community planning, they will be calling specific stakeholders, having transparent conversations with them, as well as doing the big group facilitated stakeholder meetings. Somebody may say something in a group forum, where we might want additional information individually based on those requests. They are looking at it from a two-fold perspective.

Nancy Reding asked how information will be provided to Genevieve. Genevieve explained that it will be facilitated through the stakeholder meetings. Sharon will give additional information on how that will be collected. They are hoping between now and end of September to have all that information to be strategic as they move forward with the three year plan.

Steve Roussos, Community Initiatives for Collective Impact, asked if the state is also saying along with the cut, that they will need to have some focus over the next three years around COVID as the vaccine comes out or other stressors around COVID, or if they are leaving that up to the county to decide how COVID related it will be. Genevieve responded that the state is still not giving a direct answer other than them wanting collaboration with public health in all of the behavioral health conversations. They want to make sure there are appropriate protocols to maintain safety in terms of sanitation, and social distancing, by getting a lot of the direction from public health. Genevieve said that they are hoping to maybe initiate some groups again. They wrote a proposal and had the public health's medical officer review it to make sure that we are being clinically and physically appropriate in terms of maintaining the whole holistic care; they definitely want us to make sure that we are in conversations with public health. Genevieve said she will be transparent and informed that she will be on a six hour long call tomorrow with the state regarding a variety of different things and is anticipating that being on the agenda. Genevieve shared that they will put in contracts a line that says that organizations and individuals must stay current on COVID requirements and restrictions; such as having hand sanitizer, social distancing, masks, etc.

Tatiana Vizcaino, National Alliance of Mental Illness, asked if there is a county plan effort and interest in expanding the ability of organizations to connect using media conferencing platforms for these kinds of meetings and also to transition some of our services. Genevieve responded that it is a work in progress and they are trying to work through that. She explained that Blue Jeans is the current approved county driven platform for us to use. The reason why Zoom and others can't be used is because of all the protected health information that is connected to our servers. At this point in time they are not secure enough to host those meetings. Genevieve noted that there are definitely lots of conversations about different platforms that can potentially be used. Genevieve added that they are trying to figure out what is the best and

most efficient without jeopardizing our own electronic health record (EHR), HIPAA, and CFR42. Genevieve said she would hate by any means to put any client information out there on accident and someone trying to hack. They are looking at ways to safe guard that and there are many conversations on the back end. The Mental Health Advisory Meeting in early July will be the first attempt to have a community driven meeting with video through Blue Jeans. Anybody who is interested in coming in via video will be given a link; they will have to call and request it. It will be in the newspapers and publicly posted on our Facebook on how to do that, but it will be by request for the link to actually have the video option.

Genevieve is excited to be working with everyone and with Sharon Jones as they move this forward in the community. At some point Genevieve would love to actually meet with everyone, and not have to use phone or video. She is looking forward to all of them working together over the next few years.

VII. Program Presentation:

Fernando Granados asked everyone to be mindful and keep presentations at a maximum of 10 minutes, as other agenda items have to be covered. Heydi Herrera confirmed with Fernando that Golden Valley would present on both programs.

Ker Thao, Merced Lao Family, presented a PowerPoint on their Prevention and Early Intervention Cultural Broker Program. The PowerPoint was emailed to all members prior to the teleconference. The presentation provided information on the program's funding, mission, vision, goals, cultural broker, new additional services, priority population, referral process, placement of services, data outcomes, activities, LGBTQ+ supportive services, smart goals, and successes.

Fernando proposed that Golden Valley Health Center's presentation be postponed for next month to allow questions and answers for this presentation and everyone agreed.

Nancy Reding commented that she was not sure why they met with the Youth Leadership Institute to train their staff. The LGBTQ Alliance is the only group in Merced as an organization that does trainings. She said that Lao family never contacted the Alliance for any support even though numerous people in the organization reached out. Nancy expressed she has some severe concerns that many of the LGBTQ information is combined with mental health issues. That is a great concern of hers because homosexuality has not been cleared as a mental health issue since the 80s. Nancy thinks combining this information about LGBTQ+ with mental health is a whole different connotation to being gay within Merced. Another issue that Nancy said she has is that Merced Lao talked about the 2 flags when there is a total of 12 different flags dealing with the LGBTQ community; she noted that they all need additional training and education. She added that LGBTQ is not a vulnerable population, as it was mentioned in the brochures included in the presentation; it is an underserved and ignored population. She believes it is also not an issue but it might be for some people. Nancy thinks if Merced Lao had contacted the Alliance, their presentation to 17 leaders would have been more complete.

Ker Thao explained that they reached out to Alliance and met with Tou Lee from Merced LGBTQ Alliance. He had directed them to YLI in the beginning when they first received the grant. Then they continued the collaboration with YLI under their contract, and back and forth with Tou Lee. From what they know he is no longer with Alliance. Merced Lao knows there are many more flags but at that time they were provided with 2 flags so only those were distributed. Ker apologized and stated that if Alliance and YLI want to collaborate in the future, they are more than welcome to invite them. Ker knows that they are not trained enough and look forward to more training working with more organizations in Merced county.

Eli Sachse asked Ker where they got the address in their brochure. Ker explained that it was from an outreach she attended, as it was in one of LGBTQ+ Alliance's brochures. Eli noted that Merced Alliance has not had a street address for many years. Ker asked if Eli could provide the correction. Eli explained that as of right now there is no physical address. Ker asked Nancy if she could provide the correct information to update the brochure. Nancy said the address has never been anything associated with LGBTQ, and that it's very important that Merced Lao reaches out to Merced LGBTQ Alliance; she suggested they reach out to her. Nancy added that they have reached out to Lao Family many times and have never gotten anything in return. Ker explained that they contacted Tou Lee and never heard anything back. Sharon informed that any other questions would be taken note of and something could be set up to answer questions. Eli Sachse asked what other LGBTQ community members were involved in the planning implementation or vetting of their program besides Tou Lee. Eli appreciates Merced Lao's presentation, what they have done, and thinks it is meaningful. He hears that Merced Lao Family collaborated with Tou Lee and noted that he is a great ally. Sharon thanked Eli for this question and noted that this will be recorded and documented for follow up.

VIII. MHSA Three Year Plan Community Planning

Sharon stated that everything that has been verbalized thus far is very valuable and important; all voices and all the work that we do is important. She thinks this will be wonderful in terms of transformation and integration as we move into the three year planning process. Sharon asked everyone to be patient. She knows some have been patient for a while but the three year plan will be a great opportunity. Along with Sharon, they have contracted with Jennifer Susskind to further hear the voices. The contractor is a neutral person, to really speak to some of the conversations and the work that needs to be moved forward in Merced County. Jennifer will be working along with the MHSA team to further enhance and build capacity with the community planning process. Sharon officially announced today as the kick off for the MHSA community planning process. Jennifer Susskind will be reaching out to many via phone as a key informant to further have conversations about needed collaborations for the LGBTQ community, and to further identify what training and collaborations are needed. Sharon noted that we are in a time where a lot of healing needs to take place. A timeline will be sent out after Jennifer and Sharon connect in a meeting shortly, regarding the progression of this. They will also be meeting in larger groups and have key informants. They will have the world café where everyone comes together after they correlate all the information. Sharon mentioned the cultural humility piece of lifelong learning and the critical self-reflection that each one of us has to take to look at ourselves and mitigate the power imbalances that exist. The MHSA team, Jennifer Susskind, and the department at BHRS, will be moving forward to integrate, provide cross-cultural learning, hear the voices, and to really make it a safe space for individuals to get healing and for services to go forward.

IX. Top Two Three Year Plan Community Planning

Sharon stated that this agenda item would not be covered today. A survey will go out asking individuals about their top two priorities. These will be priorities that will benefit us all. Sharon asked the group: What is good for Merced County? What is good for these behavioral health services? What is good in terms of prevention and early intervention, community services and support? Sharon asked everyone to respond to this survey on their top two priorities from a collective perspective not an individualistic perspective, but what is needed to have a healthy community and build community health.

Jennifer Susskind briefly introduced herself. She is excited to be working in Merced County again. What she remembers most about this county is the emphasis that people like Sharon place on seeking out under represented voices and engaging a wide range of community stake holders. Jennifer is pleased to be part of that process and to enhance it along with Sharon and the other staff. Jennifer welcomed Genevieve and expressed her excitement for the new leadership; she is looking forward to how that will impact the planning process. Jennifer comes from a community organizing background and after doing community organizing and social services for 15 years, she started looking more and working more with data and putting those numbers aside for decision making. She brings both the quantitative and qualitative together. She is looking forward to using that background and to bring these conversations to share with everyone. If anyone has any questions for Jennifer, they may ask Sharon for her contact information. Sharon noted that there is more to come on the community planning process, the timeline, more training, key informant interviews, and more conversations.

X. Administrative Updates and Changes

No updates /changes.

XI. Possibilities and Success Stories

Sharon Jones thinks the possibilities are unlimited when looking at it from a place of transformation, looking at what they have and what they're grateful for, and looking at how we can even make it better.

XII. Next Steps

The next Ongoing Planning Council is scheduled on July 16, 2020 at 9:00 am.

XIII. Adjourned

Meeting adjourned at 9:59 am