

Summary

Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Cultural Humility, Health Equity & Social Justice Committee

August 26, 2021
10:05 am – 11:00 am
Behavioral Health & Recovery Services
via Teleconference

Present:

Sabrina Abong, Alyssa Castro, Vong Chang, Jose Chavez-Diaz, Caitlin Haygood, Sharon Jones, Alejandro Jurado, Cindy Mattox, Christy McCammond, Katilyn McIntire, Marilyn Mochel, Maria Orozco, Rocio Ortega, Sandra Sandoval, Anna Santos, Brian Sterkeson, Belle Vallador, Pangcha Vang

Presentation and Discussion:

All Members

I. Check-in/Conocimiento

Sharon asked that those in attendance email Maria Orozco to confirm their attendance.

II. Approval of Minutes

The approval of minutes for July 22, 2021, was motioned/seconded (Pangcha Vang / Alyssa Castro) and carried.

III. Discussion on COVID-19 and Supportive Strategies for Our Communities

Sharon Jones asked the committee to share some strategies for supporting communities with high social determinants of health when it comes to COVID-19. Jose Chavez-Diaz from Golden Valley Health Centers (GVHC) said that GVHC continues to go out into the community with their mobile van to provide vaccine the nurses also offer minor health care to individuals who are unhoused. Community Health Workers/Cultural Brokers continue to go into underserved communities to provide vaccines and education about the vaccine. The van is running Monday through Friday and on the weekends when necessary.

Vong Chang from Turning Point CARE Program shared that in his program they have taken an understanding that not a lot of their consumers will be vaccinated for various reasons, but that should not stop them from meeting them in their home environment and should not be a barrier to services. Turning Point staff will continue to pre-screen them to ensure that there is less risk for exposure.

Sharon Jones shared that BHRS has ramped up their outreach. They have collaborated with Central Valley Opportunity Center (CVO) to hold outreach events in the parking lot. They started offering kits with warming blankets, meals that heat up without the need of a microwave, and have tents for anyone who is in need of one. Sharon says what we are finding in our community is that necessities like food and electricity are needed. They have been working to support families who are in need and connect them with resources.

Sandra Sandoval from Public Health shared that they have continued to provide the COVID kits that provide information about where to get vaccinated. Sandra and Rocio have been going to outreach events and continue to provide virtual stress reduction workshops.

Marilyn Mochel shared that United Way has two collaborative projects. One project is with UCSF in which COVID testing is provided once a week in Planada in collaboration with the school district. There has definitely been a rise in positive cases. The other project is with UC Merced in which they are working to provide vaccines at the flea markets in Atwater and Merced. There is also an effort to provide twice-monthly conversations with the communities that includes a large

number of the promotores in the County to provide them with regular updates about COVID and mental wellness resources. Amid all the COVID information there is a great need for support for children and families. The Mutual Aid Fund is also actively working with them when we identify the individuals with positive COVID tests.

Anna Santos from Aspiranet TIP shared that Aspiranet developed a marketing campaign for staff. They call it “Shot for Hope” and there are incentives for employees to get vaccinated for COVID-19. Aspiranet has about 1,000 employees overall and close to 80% of employees have been vaccinated. They do a good job at sending out links every Friday with information from CalOSHA, the CDC, and the state regarding COVID. In Anna’s program they have seen an increase in suicidal ideation. They have been trying to put resources together and continue to support the youth.

Belle Vallador from Healthy House shared that they are using their elder abuse monthly meetings as the medium to connect community members with agencies that can help them during this hard time. For example, she invited Project Sentinel, a non-profit fair housing agency who helps people facing housing discrimination by helping them know their rights. This meeting is attended by members of multiple agencies and is held every last Monday of the month. They also collaborate with an organization that provides free legal services to low-income individuals. Their offices are in Lodi, but they visit Merced at least twice a month. Belle said she could always provide people with the numbers needed to connect individuals with legal services. Although we have an extension of the eviction moratorium, we will be facing a lot of eviction issues.

IV. Suicide Prevention Month (Theme is Supportive Transitions: Reconnect, Reenter, Rebuild)

Sharon Jones shared about BHRS’s Suicide Prevention Initiative. We continue to recognize Suicide Prevention Month and work towards suicide safer community. Be on the lookout for the Suicide Prevention Month banner that will be placed across G Street, as well as updated PSAs on the radio. This year’s theme is about building a suicide safer community, mitigating contributors when they happen, and building a protective barrier. This year’s event will be held at BHRS. Caitlin will send out a link for vendors to register for a booth at the event. Sharon invites everyone to attend and share information about the event with others. She shared that she will also be offering safeTALK and ASIST trainings. Information about registering for these trainings will be shared soon.

Marilyn Mochel shared an article entitled *Pandemic Unveils Growing Suicide Crisis for Communities of Color*. It has some statistics and as these efforts at BHRS continue maybe we can be more inclusive of what we are seeing nationally, especially among young people. Sharon agrees and would like to conduct some outreach to support that area. It was also suggested that there be more efforts to highlight the resources available in the community. Most young people do not know where they could find support when they need it. Sharon asked if there was any information that people wanted to share to help connect young people to resources as needed. Marilyn Mochel shared from a NAMI perspective that they often refer young people to the Youth Crisis Stabilization Unit. There is still an issue getting services quickly for individuals with insurance. There is definitely a need for more resources for individuals experiencing severe symptoms. Sharon shared about the Youth Warm Line, which is available by calling 209-381-6800 and asking for the warm line. She also asked that if anyone is in need of linkage to care, please email or call her so they can be connected with the Strengthening Families Program.

Belle Vallador shared that Healthy House is continuously providing boxes of fresh fruits and vegetables in connection with the community garden they have near Shepard of the Valley Church on Yosemite Ave in Merced. This service is in collaboration with Dignity Health and is available to individuals with diabetes and high blood pressure. The service is available to individuals who are patients with Dignity Health. Their provider can write a prescription for the service, which is then provided to Healthy House. The community garden has around 100 garden beds.

Alyssa Castro from Youth Leadership Institute (YLI) asked if there would be anyone focusing on media coverage for the Suicide Prevention event on 9/29. Some of the young folks with YLI are focusing on developing story ideas for the month. Alyssa would like to push some of the narratives from the different resources out for the month. Sharon said the flyer will go out on social media and the department website, but she would be excited to collaborate. Alyssa said she will reach

out to Sharon to touch bases.

V. Criterion 5: Culturally Competent Training Activities

Sharon asked for feedback about how the department can ramp up culturally competent training activities. Specifically, she asked for ideas about new possible approaches to training that the department should consider adding. Sharon provided an example of training for individuals to bring awareness to the diversity of thought and inclusion, especially for individuals who decide funding for community programs. Jose Chavez Diaz from GVHC shared that his team decided they would like more training on how to better serve LGBTQ+ populations. Alyssa Castro said the YLI offers a training on how to support queer youth and offered to collaborate with GVHC to set up a training for staff. Marilyn Mochel said that many of the cultural competence trainings do not get as deep into the trauma that is occurring due to racism and discrimination. Some of the tools that include videos such as *The Color of Fear*. Marilyn said that individuals have to be prepared for the discussions that can happen if you have multiple racial groups together and if you include white people. Marilyn shared that when she facilitated training, if she was the only white person in the room, people felt very comfortable to share. If there were multiple white people in the room the conversation did not go anywhere. To have these conversations there has to be a level of trust that we often do not have. Sometimes our trainings give an introduction, but they do not talk about the nuance. We need to go deeper. Pangcha Vang suggested a cultural training on common experiences within LGBTQ+ populations, with a focus on statistics like the fact that LGBTQ+ individuals are more likely to experience homelessness and violence, as well as a training that teaches about name and gender change and information about trans hormones, how social workers can help the transgender community, how case management looks different for a LGBTQ+ client, and how we can advocate for transgender individuals when their doctors will not respect their own name. Pangcha also suggested a training on incarceration, trauma, how we can decolonize our prejudice and our thoughts about this population, and class privilege. We need to be bold enough to talk about these issues. Sharon would like to work with the committee to formulate a training list on these topics. Belle Vallador suggested focusing on specific ethnicities in order to better understand culture and beliefs that are prevalent in the specific community. Belle said that it has to begin with the advocates for these communities. Sharon also mentioned the power of having someone with lived experience provide trainings, as well as the power of peer support. Sharon said SUD has a great model for peer support, but it would be beneficial to grow peer support within mental health fields. Jose Chavez Diaz agreed. He mentioned that Golden Valley Health Center is hiring positions locally. Brian Sterkeson, BHRS, said that we have to realize that most of our cultural perspective happens on the unconscious level. In addition to training sessions, we have to look at how we reinforce that cultural perspective and include all perspectives as part of the organizational culture. Sharon elaborated that building a culture that is inclusive and encourages lifelong learning is very important for an organization.

VI. Criterion 6: County's Commitment to Growing a Multicultural Workforce: Hiring and Retaining Culturally and Linguistically Competent Staff

This agenda item was tabled.

VII. Substance Use Division Reports

This agenda item was tabled.

VIII. Client/Consumer Reports

There was no client/consumer report.

IX. Updates

This agenda item was tabled.

X. Possibilities and Success Stories

This agenda item was tabled.

XI. Next Steps

Sharon said she would like to have a client/consumer advocate at upcoming meetings. Pangcha suggested also inviting a youth advocate, LGBTQ+ advocate, and an advocate for individuals who are incarcerated.

XII. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 11:00 AM.