

Summary

Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Ongoing Planning Council

March 24, 2022

9:00am – 10:00am

Behavioral Health & Recovery Services Department

Teleconference via Zoom

Present:

Sharon Jones, Fernando Granados, Monica Adrian, Micki Archuleta, Zeus Baldevia, Maribel Baron, Vong Chang, Jaz Chima, Maria Colomer, Susan Coston, Maria Haro-Veloz, Heydi Herrera, Melyssa Hintz, Adam Lane, Cindy Mattox, Jennifer McQueen, Sharon Mendonca, Marilyn Mochel, Ismael Muñoz, Jenna Nunes, Maria Ocegueda, Jesse Ornelas, Nancy Ortiz, Sandra Sandoval, Lanetta Smyth, Cari Urquiza, Bao Vang, Pangcha Vang, Janet Zamudio

Presentation and Discussion:

All Members

I. Call to Order / Roll Call

II. Approval of Minutes

The approval of minutes for February 24, 2022 was motioned /seconded (Monica Adrian, Jenna Nunes) and carried.

III. Update Planning Council Contact List

Fernando Granados, Chair, encouraged all attendees to confirm their attendance via chat or by emailing Maria Orozco.

IV. Notice to the Public

Pangcha Vang, with the party for Socialism and Liberation, provided community input for the MHSA Fiscal Year 2022-2023. Pangcha requested that the Behavioral Health Board meetings be held at 6pm or later on a weekday, so that working families can attend and participate. These meetings should be recorded and provided to the county website for transparency. The mental health work should be required to have peer-advocates and family advocates who are actually clients of the MHSA programs. The MHSA Ongoing Planning Council meetings should also be held at 6pm or later on a weekday so that working families can attend and participate. Meetings should be recorded and provided to the county website for transparency. The Ongoing Planning Council should also have peer advocates and family advocates to serve on the council. Pangcha also thinks that MHSA should have a full-service partnership that is needed to provide mental health care and case management to immigrants, refugees the undocumented, and their children. This program would provide cultural and linguistic appropriate services, and would also provide families to adjust on American culture and navigate the system by connecting families to resources – this program would help families obtain citizenship, legal help, housing, access to education, support for employment, transportation, and flex plan which would provide financial assistance to families to reach their treatment goals. The SEC goal would be to reduce disparity and service access. The fourth thing that MHSA needs is a full-service partnership to provide quality mental health care and case management to the LGBTQ+ community. This program would help individuals with name and gender change, access to hormones, support with surgery letters, access to healthcare, transportation, housing, education, employment, and a flex fund to help with financial assistance to individuals to reach their treatment goal. The SEC goal would be to reduce disparity and service access. The fifth thing is that MHSA needs to require each inpatient, outpatient, county, and non-profit programs to employ a peer advocate and family advocate to every program. It is important that clients receive care support, family support, advocacy, and empathy. The peer advocate and family advocate positions would require so much to have lived experience of living with a mental illness and receiving services with MHSA programs. The sixth thing is that MHSA needs to require each inpatient and outpatient county and non-profit program to employ a LGBTQ advocate, a formerly incarcerated advocate, and an undocumented advocate, with lived experience. It is these populations that are falling through the cracks of the system; it is these populations who are underserved and unserved. The seventh thing is that MHSA needs to remove all probation officers and law enforcement off of BHRS and MHSA mental health programs in physical locations. It is unacceptable that MHSA programs such as CSOC and SUD have a probation officer stationed at their locations but not a peer advocate. Pangcha asked to please remove the law enforcement in the Livingston mental health program at the school. Black and brown, and poor communities are often policed, incarcerated, punished, monitored, and experience violence from law enforcement and probation officers. Probation officers often bully people, intimidate people, and prevent them from pursuing legal help and it causes conflict of interest with MHSA.

Eight, that Marie Green inpatient mental health facility needs to serve the clients who are on 5150 – it is unacceptable that Marie Green feeds their clients prison food, the same food that they feed prison people. Nine, the Marie Green mental health facility needs to have a policy that all staff and management needs to support transgender's real names. Ten, that MHSA programs need to serve a maximum number of clients assigned to clinicians – currently clients are unable to receive regular quality mental health services because clinicians are overworked and assigned to a heavy caseload. Eleven, MHSA needs to require the Board of Supervisors to spend more local county budget dollars on mental health programs. Currently, the Board of Supervisors are spending more than 50% on criminal justice and their prison but they are spending very little on mental health.

V. Chair's Report

No report.

VI. BHRS Report

Sharon Jones reported that they are working on a new electronic health record system at BHRS. In regards to CalAIMs, there will be about 12 trainings that Cal-MHSA is going to provide on the new CalAIM and the whole restructure of the medical system. This will be sent out to everyone after the meeting for those interested in participating. They will be about an hour long but it has been put together just so that we can understand CalAIM and what the expectations are. It is a huge change anytime that you're changing the system and the way that we do things. Also, at Behavioral Health & Recovery Services we are open and operating, seeing clients, and providing services. The MSHA community and prevention workers are back in the community going to parks, providing support, reaching out to people, and finding out what the needs are. Sharon noted that those are the big highlights – we are in operation gearing up for CalAIM and getting ready to upload the new electronic health records system. Sharon added that there have been several audits: EQRO (External Quality Reviews) for mental health and Substance Use as well. Fernando Granados asked what type of presentation it is. Sharon thinks they are webinars. Cal MHSA has put together everything you need to know CalAIM. There are about 10-12 of them. The link will be sent out so that people can register if interested. Sharon thinks it will be really nice just to understand what it's about. Sharon plans on participating on all of them. Lanetta Smyth agreed and commented that they look really well laid out. Sharon shared that she is the alternate at the Cal MHSA board meetings, so they have done a lot of the work to help everyone understand, as opposed to having people read. Fernando encouraged everyone to really view those videos because it will impact all of their programs as well, so they may want to be aware of the potential impacts it would have on the delivery of services within our own programs.

Sharon Mendonca, BHRS Assistant Director, informed that there are 10 trainings. She said that not all are geared towards clinical staff, some are geared towards more support staff. Just because there are 10 of them doesn't mean you have to attend all 10 – she suggested to attend those that pertain to them. Sharon Jones thinks it will be very meaningful because it will help to understand what CalAIM is all about.

Fernando suggested that maybe in the future we can have a presentation in this meeting on how the departments can implement these changes that CalAIM is asking for. Sharon Jones shared that we will have Jennifer Mockus present as well, possibly next month, from a managed care perspective. Sharon thinks it would be great to get perspectives from both, specialty mental health in BHRS and Central California Alliance for Health.

VII. Presentation: US Dept of Veterans Affairs – Preventing Veteran Suicide

Presentation tabled.

VIII. MHSA Issues Resolution Process

Sharon stated that we do have a requirement for the Issues Resolution Process and this will be another document that will be sent out after the meeting. The Issues Resolution Process is in regards to the community program planning process if there are concerns in regards to the implementation of programs or the consistency of programs – any plan that is approved under MHSA. If there is a concern, the state requires that we exhaust all options using the Issues Resolution Process before going to the state, such as the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability, Department of Health Care Services or the California Behavioral Health Planning Council. This process is put into place to support the individual bringing forth their voices. Sometimes we see it more as a threat or an inadequacy of people who bring forth their voices. Under MHSA, this process is in place because we want to hear your voices, and we want it to come forth to meet together prior to going to the state. Sharon added that they want to work it out here on the local level at Merced County. This process is about addressing issues of MHSA in an appropriate and expedient manner, meaning that we want to get it resolved quickly so that we can move on with the process of recovery. Sharon explained the different avenues to resolve issues. If there is an issue or there is something that needs to be filed, this is the process you follow. She noted that they are open to feedback. After it is filed and to close the loop, a response will be provided for the issue. Sharon discussed about inconsistencies with approved plans. If a plan is spoken of in a particular way by the

stakeholders, and all of sudden it has taken a whole different direction, that would be something you would have an issue with. Also, using MHSAs funds in an inappropriate manner is another part of this. Sharon wanted to make it very clear that there is a process, and the different ways in which to access this. For any questions, please feel free to contact her.

IX. MHSAs Community Planning Process Review

Sharon reminded everyone that we are currently in a community planning process. Even though Mental Health Services Act is the funding, when we are having these focus groups, we are talking about all things: BHRS, mental health, behavioral health, and SUD. Just because it is an MHSAs focus group, that doesn't mean it's totally restricted; it goes into a broader topic of behavioral health care. As part of the community planning process, that is a way to comment as well. The process starts by taking a look at where we are in terms of approved programs and any changes or additions. It will culminate with the approval at the Board of Supervisors. A stakeholder process is required – there have been focus groups thus far.

X. Update on MHSAs Focus Group Feedback

Sharon Jones stated that they are open to feedback as they are in the middle of a community planning process. She mentioned Pangcha's feedback in the public comments, and noted that it was very thorough – an opportunity to transform the system, to grow, and meet our diverse communities. Sharon asked Pangcha if it could be sent to them.

XI. Update on MHSAs DRAFT Annual Update

Sharon explained that the community planning process draft annual update is currently with the director for review in draft form. It will be in draft form up until the Board of Supervisors approves it. Sharon said that they were hoping to post it on Friday, but they think that it will be a little delayed because Sharon has to meet with the director. Sharon gave accolades to Cindy Mattox as it is a lot of work with so many MHSAs programs; Cindy is able to work very diligently and make meaning out of what everyone is doing in terms of outcomes as it requires a lot of thought, effort, and energy. Sharon thanked Cindy for that because she takes the lead with this and does a wonderful job.

Sharon shared about 2 wonderful focus they had within the last couple of weeks. They had one with the LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters community, which was really robust and nice. One thing that was documented was that we have a little bit of growth in Merced County, so things are moving forward a little bit.

Jennifer McQueen, Merced Pride Center, expressed that she was very happy they had that focus group. She as well enjoyed hearing the feedback. She thanked Sharon for the opportunity. Sharon added that it was a wonderful focus group – the power of community, the power of voices. Sharon is wanting a training from all of those voices. She thinks it would be wonderful for administrative staff because it was an excellent focus group. It is also a showcasing of the progress that we've made in Merced County. Sometimes we feel like nothing is going right and there's no forward momentum, but in the focus group Sharon learned that if a flag was raised to support and to represent LGBTQ+ in Merced County that is really good progress. There was so much wonderful sharing and learning feedback – it was really healthy, really powerful, and Sharon really enjoyed it.

Adam Lane, LGBTQ Collaborative, shared that he really appreciated the focus group as well and was heartened to see that there were perhaps 45 people that were present. That is a big change from previous years when there have been focus groups and maybe there weren't even so much as 10 involved. Adam thought it was amazing and thanked Sharon for facilitating it. Sharon noted that it was also across county lines. Sharon thinks that collaboration is powerful, and even though it was just little Merced, the Central Valley was present. She loves that because often times we are moving towards some of the same goals, and we stay in silos, but it opened up and that was great to see as well.

Sharon mentioned that another focus group they had was with some of the clinical staff in the Children's System of Care. Whenever Sharon approaches any topic we always know that there are pros and cons, high points, and there are possibilities and successes to do things better. Here in Merced County, and many counties, we are in need of more practitioners. When we are in need of more practitioners, that means that the practitioners, clinicians, or whatever the type of scope of work we have, may be carrying a little bit more. The need for more staff and a balance of caseloads was brought up in the focus group. That was also a powerful focus group to see what the needs are and how we can move forward to help, support, and strategize. Sharon let everyone know that if at any time anyone would like a focus group, they are now done year long. If there is a topic or a voice they want to raise, just reach out to Sharon and a focus group will be set up to hear their voices. Not just voices, because voices get disempowered, but to see what resources and capability we have to address their needs. We may not be able to address them in that moment, but who knows, maybe we'll be able to raise even more flags here in Merced County. Sharon was really excited about that. Sharon noted that our goal is always diversity and inclusion. We may not be there yet, but Sharon knows that as we do move forward, we have to move forward in healthy energy. Just because something may not be happening that we want it still does not give us the right to be negative or to put down things, but to really work for inclusion because inclusion

is wonderful; we know that it feels bad to be excluded. We are moving toward acknowledging diversity and inclusion, as well as doing it in a culturally humble way. Sharon always refocuses herself about wearing the community hat because that is where mental health happens in the community. As MHSA Coordinator, she is more than open to receiving emails, to sit down with them, etc. It is so important to keep that community health and healing going, as well as to have healthy voices in the community.

XII. Administrative Updates and Changes

Sharon reported that she now has a program manager under her supervision, Ayesha Hunter. They have listened to the voices, and she will be providing group supervision and developing clinical trainings. As many know, Sharon Jones does a lot of the trainings here in Merced County BHRS, so the hope is to build even further by adding more clinical trainings and trainings that will move them forward. Sharon said that if there is anyone who would like to meet with Sharon to discuss a training that they want to move forward, it requires approval from our director, but Sharon would be more than willing to work with them and see what they could bring forward to build capacity with training, cultural humility, and life-long learning. For any training requests, please email Sharon Jones.

Sharon noted that Micki Archuleta shared via chat: *The cross-county collaboration with Stanislaus in the LGBTQ focus groups represents an effort by that county to take over the local efforts of queer volunteers.*

Sharon shared that the goals of MHSA include essential elements that they operate under: community collaboration, cultural competence, client and family driven integrative services model and wellness, recovery, and resilience. We all want to feel well because if we feel well, we can thrive. Sharon announced that the annual update draft will be posted soon and a notification will be sent out. When it's posted for 30 days, there will be time for everyone to give further feedback. Sharon asks that they review it. There will be a public hearing with the Behavioral Health Board after that. At that public hearing, there's time for more comments and more feedback. They are looking for an action at the public hearing to have the plan sent to the Board of Supervisors for approval. Once they approve, it needs to be sent to the state within 30 days. The timeline is to have it to the state by June 30th.

Fernando Granados requested a Budget report for Administrative Updates and Changes at the next meeting to see where they are at with MHSA funding. He shared about increases coming to the county in regards to MHSA and wants to know what that means for Merced County. Sharon explained that the way it currently works is that there's a formula that they use. As part of the formula, is the population size and other things and that is how they determine the allocation of the amount of money that each county is going to receive. The money comes in every month and it varies – it's not a set amount because it's depending on the millionaires and the amount of money they are making as well. Sharon agreed to add "finances report" on the next agenda. At the public hearing, Sharon will also be speaking about the different programs that we have, the approved program amounts, and any proposed changes to the current annual update.

XIII. Announcements

Bao Vang, Merced Lao Family, shared that next week, on Saturday, April 2nd at Applegate Park, they will be hosting their mental health day awareness. There will be a COVID-19 mobile vehicle out there for anyone who needs vaccination. There will also be other partners out there tabling. She asked that they all share that everyone is welcome – it will be from 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM. For any questions, please reach out by calling the Merced Lao Family phone number.

Jenna Nunes, announced that they have a stigma event in the evening at Delhi, from 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM. There is still room if anybody would like to come with a booth or table to provide information on services. If they know somebody who was attending Delhi High School or the elementary, or parents of those attending those schools, they are invited as well. This event was made to include parents. They do have a couple of April dates – Jenna can provide those to Melyssa to send out to everybody. Monica Adrian, Caring Kids, asked if they just had an event at Merced High yesterday. Jenna confirmed that they did. Monica added that she saw it over social media and looked pretty well attended. Jenna said it was a huge success. They did not stop moving, talking, and keeping students engaged. With the pandemic, there was less attendance in stigma events and this one felt more pre-COVID. Jenna expressed that it was really good to see everybody out there.

Jesse Ornelas, Youth Leadership Institute, shared that this Sunday at McNamara Park from 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM, they will be having a youth art show. They will be having special performances from some local youth musicians. There will also be a vaccination clinic, free food, raffle prizes, opportunities for people to participate in some art, and music provided by DJ Zilla. Also, April 2nd at McNamara Park, they will be having a Spring equinox ceremony with Aztec dancers from northern California, vendors selling different types of crafts, and Native jewelry. The event will be at 9:00 AM – 2:30 PM. The flyers will be sent to Sharon. Sharon reported that the Merced High School event yesterday was wonderful and very resourceful. Jessica's House from Turlock was there – they offer grief and loss support for children, teens, young adults, and their families. Sharon invited her to present at this meeting and she said she would be willing to do that. They are also doing tours of their new set up; she will be sending

Sharon information on that as well. With COVID-19 and even before that, something can always be connected to grief and loss. Sharon thinks this is a wonderful program and that many could benefit. Jessica also wants to do a lot of collaboration with other programs and partners; Sharon thinks this is a wonderful opportunity because probably everyone on here has felt grief in their lifetime as well as during COVID-19. More to come on that.

XIV. Possibilities and Success Stories

Sharon thinks the biggest possibility that we have here is that we have a community as part of MHSA representative stakeholders and planning council. She thinks that they started to collaborate even more and started to value what each person or each program is offering. Sharon thinks that's how they are going to build help for people – by working together and sharing what they have. Jesse shared some wonderful things and other people did as well. Sharon recommended to attend the events because there is wonderful information. When they speak about diversity and inclusion, one thing you often think about is that when people are having events that may not represent who you are or think you are, you get to know the people, their dreams, visions, or what they're going through. When we work together and hold that positive energy of inclusion and diversity, and just see the good in people instead of calling out the wrong, it always works for humanity. Working together, collaborating, and keeping that cultural humility.

XV. Next Steps

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 28, 2022.

The Issues Resolution Process will be sent out.

A budget report will be provided in administrative updates and changes in the next meeting.

XVI. Adjourned

The meeting adjourned at 9:42 AM