

# Summary

## Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Ongoing Planning Council

July 28, 2022  
9:00am – 10:00am

Behavioral Health & Recovery Services Department  
Teleconference via Zoom

### Present:

Sharon Jones, Fernando Granados, Monica Adrian, Misty Rose Bautista, Derric Brown, James Brown, Vong Chang, Heydi Herrera, Melyssa Hintz, Ayesha Hunter, Jessica Kirby, Tony Lor, Conor Maloney, Cindy Mattox, Rebecca McMullen, Jennifer McQueen, Manuela Miranda, Jenna Nunes, Jesse Ornelas, Maria Orozco, Rocio Ortega, Sandra Sandoval, Brian Sterkeson, Iohana Tapia, Paul Thao, Ye Thao, Cari Urquiza, Belle Vallador

### Presentation and Discussion:

*All Members*

#### I. Call to Order / Roll Call

#### II. Approval of Minutes

The approval of minutes for June 23, 2022 was motioned /seconded (Jenna Nunes /Misty Rose Bautista) and carried.

#### III. Update Planning Council Contact List

Sharon Jones encouraged all attendees to confirm their attendance via chat or by emailing Maria Orozco.

#### IV. Notice to the Public

None.

#### V. Chair's Report

No Report. Fernando informed that they will soon be having elections for a new co-chair.

#### VI. BHRS Report

Sharon Jones reported that one of the biggest things is the Winton clinic – the clinic in Livingston is now located in Winton. More to come on that. That is our North County clinic now. Within that clinic, Sharon Mendonca discussed it in the previous meeting, but there's supposed to be a wellness center and an outpatient clinic as well. Sharon mentioned the possibility of someone coming to give the group a presentation on the new clinic location in Winton. Also, the CUBE (Community United by Empowerment) is open again with extended hours. Sharon will try to send that out to everyone today. She thinks the CUBE is staying open until 6pm or 7 pm; Sharon needs to clarify if it's every day or twice a week. That is the transitional age center so she wants to make sure to get that information to the council as well. Genevieve Valentine, the BHRS Director, is still out. Sharon is hearing that she's supposed to be returning next week. Sharon added that the department is still up and operating – the clinics are open and we're still providing services.

#### VII. COVID-19 Update

Sharon noted that we are a health care agency so we are still wearing masks, practicing social distance, and hand sanitizing – following the protocol as we continue to provide services face-to-face with the people that we serve.

#### VIII. Discussion on CalAIM

Sharon informed that CalAIM stands for California Advancing and Innovative Medi-Cal. CalAIM is focusing on improving the Behavioral Health System. The focus is due to what they call start and equities and access to health care by race, ethnicity, and income. They also feel that the COVID-19 pandemic created more of amplified inequities for these communities. With CalAIM they're looking at worsening gaps at continuum of care, dramatically expanding the demand for behavioral health services and exposed mounting stress on the behavioral health workforce – they are looking at the expanded amount of stress on the behavioral health workforce. Another huge part of Cal-AIM is an integrated whole person care that takes into account the physical, behavioral and even dental health, and of course social and economic circumstances. Sharon noted that this is coming straight from the Department of Health Care Services – the state entity that has the governance over the mental health plans. Some of the things that they listed: one in nearly 1 in 20 California adults, which is about 4.5%, is living with a serious mental illness. More than twice have a substance use disorder. In terms of substance use disorder, 1 in 10 or 9.2%, California adults have a substance

use disorder. When looking at Medi-Cal enrollees, 8.1% are living with a serious mental illness, substantially more than those on any type of insurance. As of July 2020, during a time when the pandemic hit real hard, nearly half of all Californians reported symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder or major depression; this was tied to the public health emergency. Of course, if there was a disproportionate impact on un-resourced communities. The rights of substance use disorders, overdose, and death remain very high, so CalAIM is looking at improving the behavioral health system. Also, the rise of substance use disorders, overdose, and death remain high increasingly driven by fentanyl, including its use and combination with methamphetamine and other substances as well as is the unintentional use by individuals leading to further problems and deaths. San Francisco general hospital reports that half of psychiatric emergency room admissions are methamphetamine related. Among individuals who are just as involved, rates of serious mental illness and substance use disorders still remain high. CalAIM is a huge initiative in California. It's an initiative to improve the behavioral health care system. As an example, Sharon shared about the Faces of CalAIM: Meet Sandra and Natasha. She noted that this is what they are trying to accomplish with CalAIM – to look at the whole person. In the case of the example, they needed food, medication, and therapy. Sharon stated that other than the Network Adequacy, CalAIM is one of the largest initiatives since the Mental Health Services Act, which came about in 2004 and was to expand the mental health services. Now CalAIM is looking at improving the behavioral health care system. Sharon mentioned that she is not an expert but has been reading about it and understands. Also, Cal MHPA has trainings available if anyone would like to take the trainings she can send the links. Brian Sterkeson shared the link to the trainings via chat: <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/calaim> and <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988>.

#### **IX. 988 Launched July 16, 2022**

Over the weekend on July 16<sup>th</sup>, there was a transition to the number 988 for suicide and crisis lifeline. The transition is from a 10-digit number. The idea behind the transition is that we can remember 3 digits better than we can remember 10 digits, especially if we're in crisis. This is a joint effort with the United States Department of Health and Human Services, the Federal Communications Commission, and the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. This is to put crisis care more in the reach for people in need. Sharon can relate it to remembering 911 or 988 rather than trying to think of a 1-800 number. The initiative is part of president Biden's comprehensive strategy to address the mental health crisis that has been identified by our U.S. Health and Human Services as a top priority. If you go out to the SAMSHA website, you can print out posters to put out in their locations. They can also request some of the items with the 988 number. Many of them were out so they may need to keep checking back in order to make sure they have it up at their site or various locations. If they are doing community outreach, Sharon suggested to print out the little cards with the number so that they can access that. We will have our Central California Suicide Prevention Hotline and so the 988 will dial to there as well. There are some changes in California from CalAIM where we are looking at improving the behavioral health system, and 988 where there is improved access to a mental health crisis. Sharon encouraged everyone to visit the SAMSHA website to see what they have in stock and order for their various sites.

#### **X. Peer Support Certification**

Peer Support Certification was finally approved. If a person has been working as a peer support prior to January of this year, they fall into where they can be Grandfathering. There is a requirement for the Grandfather end such as 20 hours training, writing letters, and getting support letters and things of that nature. The deadline for getting Grandfathering is December 31<sup>st</sup> of this year. If in any of the programs they have peer support, they may want to get them certified because another thing that is connected to the certification is that peer support may now be able to chart the great work that they do in the electronic health record and be able to bill for it. Sharon will have Maria Orozco send out the information so that if they have peer support in their various programs, then you will want to get them certified. Sharon thinks it's a wonderful thing. California is usually on the cutting edge; on the East Coast she thinks they already have certified peer support.

#### **XI. Suicide Prevention Discussion**

Sharon Jones stated that there is planning on the way with the various central valley counties including Fresno, Madera, Merced, for the Suicide Prevention Summit. That summit is slated to be September 30<sup>th</sup>, 8:30am – 4:30pm. They are looking at getting Kevin Berthia as one of the speakers – he was the gentleman who attempted suicide on the Golden Gate Bridge. The first responder Kevin Briggs was able to listen to him for 92 minutes and he came back over the rail. His life was restored and regained. Now he goes around the country sharing his story, empowering others, and helping individuals. That planning committee is happening probably once a week, and it looks like Kevin Berthia will possibly be one of the keynote speakers. Another person that they're looking at is Sally Spencer Thomas. The registration will be through Eventbrite. As Sharon knows more she will let everyone know. Sharon can't stress enough that as they do their daily work, to inform families about the signs and symptoms of suicide so that we can be alert to helping individuals that might be showing invitations that they need help and could be connected to suicide. September 30<sup>th</sup> is the date for the Suicide Prevention Summit. Sharon will send out more

information out on everything else. As we do our outreach and talk to people, we want to be aware of the signs and symptoms of suicide – we have to build a suicide safer community so we can save lives.

## **XII. MHSA Fiscal Transparency Suite**

The MHSA Fiscal Transparency Suite is on the Mental Health Services Oversight & Accountability website. They're showing different things; fiscal information on all the counties as it relates to MHSA. There's a dashboard that displays information about funding, expenditures, and is county by county. Sharon encouraged the council to visit the Mental Health Services Act Oversight and Accountability website if they want to see what's listed for Merced County. On the front page they will search for Fiscal Transparency Suite. It's including revenue not only for Mental Health Services Act, but for realignment funds, Medi-Cal matching funds, and the data comes from the Department of Health Care Services. It is given that the MHSA funds come from pre-determined timelines, transactional data that has been processed first in first out, in order to preserve county ability to use the funds. It also reports a historical review of expenditures, local funds balances, and closing balances as of June 30<sup>th</sup> the reporting fiscal year. Sharon noted that some of the funds that may be listed as unspent may be in convert in contracts – there is always something new coming up in MHSA so it may be in convert. They are pretty transparent.

Brian Sterkeson provided the link to the MHSA Fiscal Transparency Suite via chat: <https://mhsoac.ca.gov/transparency-suite/>.

## **XIII. Three Year Plan Community Planning Process**

Sharon Jones informed that we are getting ready to kick off – at the next meeting we will kick off. Sharon will give a presentation and then there will be a kick off for our MHSA Community Planning Process for our Annual Update. She thinks it will be 22-23. Sharon will be reaching out to each of them to have focus groups so that they can have a dialogue and see how we can improve our system locally. Sharon noted that she shared about CalAIM, but even locally, how we can improve our behavioral health system. There are so many needs in our community, but there are so many opportunities to help. For example, her team will be traveling to Mariposa on Friday through next Friday to provide support for individuals who have been impacted by fires up in the mountains. It is across county lines, families are in need of help everywhere, and so MHSA wants to transform the mental health system – Sharon thinks they are definitely moving in the right direction. Sharon asks that everyone participates in the Community Planning Process. Also, this year, Sharon is trying to be more linguistically competent; not that we're incompetent, but having more Spanish speaking only focus groups and having maybe a focus group in Hmong – we have done it throughout the years but just being more intentional to capture the needs of the community. Also, to look at the needs of providers because with COVID-19 we stayed on the front lines, we responded, and it's not over but we are in a place where things are just a little bit better. We most recently finished the Three-Year Plan – Sharon expressed that she can't thank Cindy Mattox enough for the great job she does taking the lead on that and done in a quality way.

## **XIV. Administrative Updates and Changes**

The director has been out. BHRS has a new clinic site in Winton. Sharon mentioned that we are actively hiring – we have availability for mental health clinicians and other jobs as well. Sharon noted that is a way that we contribute to health as well, making sure individuals can provide for their families, reducing financial stressors and things of that nature.

## **XV. Announcements**

Sharon Jones shared that there are a lot of outreaches that her team is particularly participating in. Sharon knows that there's about 6 or 7 coming up.

Ye Thao, Merced Lao Family, shared via chat: Merced Lao Family will have a Covid-19 vaccination clinic on Saturday. Please remind partners and family who needs the shot.

## **XVI. Possibilities and Success Stories**

Fernando Granados shared that Sierra Vista met with the new CEO for Merced back in May and they talked about this committee here. He is interested in attending and getting to know the different community partner organizations that are in Merced County. Fernando thought this could be a platform for him to attend and each of the council members get 2 minutes to talk about the organization they are with and what they do – that way he can follow up with them if he wanted to schedule meetings outside of this meeting. Fernando noted that he's very interested in finding out what non-profits and organizations we have in Merced County. Sharon Jones said that she will check with Genevieve and see if that's possible. Sharon asked if the CEO wants a face-to-face meeting or virtual. Fernando said he understands that we're currently meeting virtually if he was okay with that as well. Fernando let him know that he would pass on that information and that Sharon would reach out to him and provide him with more details about this meeting. Sharon said she would make a note of that.

Marylin Mochel, NAMI Merced County, stated that this has a general impact on all programs and that is the expanded health care insurance. She said that Sharon talked about CalAIM and individuals 50 and older who may lack legal status may qualify

for full scope Medi-Cal. Those who had emergency Medi-Cal would be transitioned to full scope without them having to do anything. The governor announced that by January of 2023 all individuals, regardless of legal status will qualify for Medi-Cal if they meet the eligibility requirements. Sharon asked Marilyn if she knew what the eligibility requirements are. Marilyn responded that it is tied to income, they must establish that they are residents. Places like Golden Valley Health Centers help people with the eligibility process and the application; sometimes that can be a real barrier to individuals especially if language is a barrier. Then, of course, depending on what the income is, some people have a share of cost with Medi-Cal. Marilyn mentioned that she is not an expert on this. Sharon said that the income thing really helped her to understand.

Jennifer Mcqueen, Merced Pride Center, shared via chat: The Merced County Pride Fest Committee and the Merced Pride Center are hosting the Merced County Pride Fest 2022 on September 17, 2022. We would love for anyone interested in participating and/or tabling to reach out! Info and free application to table are on our website at: [www.mercedpridecenter.com](http://www.mercedpridecenter.com) under the "MC Pride Fest 2022" tab and our email is [mcpridefest@gmail.com](mailto:mcpridefest@gmail.com)

Paul Thao once again shared with the group that Merced Lao Family has been doing a lot of things, especially the food distribution for the community in Merced county. Currently they have a busy schedule and people who stay in line – Merced Lao Family has been doing a great job for the community. Paul thanked the food bank that provides the food for the county here. He wanted to let the group know that what Merced Lao Family is doing with the food distribution is outside of their work area. Paul invited anyone who may need food. It is every Thursday, depending on the food they are provided with. Paul thanked Sharon Jones for mentioning the COVID-19 clinic this upcoming Saturday. Paul believes there are many people that have the vaccine but the youth have still not cared much about it. He invited everyone to visit their Facebook and invite family or friends to go and get it.

Derric Brown, Department of Veterans Affairs, shared that he just made contact with an individual from West Care that works in Merced County. He is working with her to establish a coalition specifically for folks with veteran services in their family. Hopefully once they can get together and work things out and put things on paper, they can come back and present that to this group. Derric is excited about that.

Brian Sterkeson mentioned that there's a question in the chat about peer-certification. He said he knows very little about that. Sharon informed that the state has guidelines; she will have Maria Orozco send out the guidelines so everyone can take a look at it. Sharon will then follow up with Merced Lao Family. She clarified that this is the certification manual which talks about what is required, including dates.

**XVII. Next Steps**

The next meeting is scheduled for next month: Thursday, August 25, 2022.

We will have the kick off for the annual update in the next meeting.

Sharon asked the council to think about who might make a great co-chair for this meeting – this will be added to the next agenda.

**XVIII. Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 9:38 AM.