

Summary

Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Ongoing Planning Council

September 23, 2021

9:00 am – 10:00 am

Behavioral Health & Recovery Services Department
Teleconference via Zoom

Present:

Fernando Granados, Sharon Jones, Monica Adrian, Jennifer Carr, Joana Castañeda, Alyssa Castro, Vong Chang, Jose Chavez-Diaz, Cesar Garcia, Caitlin Haygood, Patti Kishi, Cindy Mattox, Marilyn Mochel, Julie Norton, Jenna Nunes, Jesse Ornelas, Maria Orozco, Rocio Ortega, Nancy Reding, Laura Ruell, Eli Sachse, Sandra Sandoval, Brian Sterkeson, Cari Urquiza, Bao Vang, Pangcha Vang

Presentation and Discussion:

All Members

I. Call to Order / Roll Call

II. Approval of Minutes

The approval of minutes for August 26, 2021 was motioned /seconded (Nancy Reding /Sandra Sandoval) and carried.

Brian Sterkeson, BHRS, commented that he noticed a few typos and one point that might need some clarification before the approval of the minutes. Fernando asked Brian to point out the corrections. Brian noted that on the second page, during the discussion about who can access the Navigation Center, Jennifer said it can be anybody from the city of Merced County. He asked if it is anybody from the county or is it anybody from the city. Sharon said she thinks it's anybody from Merced County. Jennifer Carr explained that it's supposed to be prioritized for the City of Merced. Sharon reiterated that the city of Merced is priority and asked if people living in other areas of Merced can also go to the Navigation Center. Jennifer said that they have made some exceptions, but they go through New Direction – it is really priority for the city of Merced. There has been discussion that if there are enough beds available that are not filled, then they will make the exception to bring people from the County of Merced. Sharon noted that it is very interesting because most people feel that it's for the whole county; that is good learning because she thinks most people think that it's serving all of Merced County. Sharon suggested including Brian on the front end before the meeting and that way if there's anything like that it can be corrected here in the department before it comes to the committee. Maria will be making the corrections suggested and typos will be forwarded to her.

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, resident of Merced County, is requesting for an ongoing MHSA meeting as well as the Social Justice board meeting to be moved from 9:00 am to be changed to 6:00 pm. If you stand for social justice and you're serving and unserved or underserved community, you need to have a meeting time where people can show up, represent and talk. She knows the minutes are published on the Merced County website, but the recording also needs to be posted so that the public can see the recording of the meeting. Pangcha wanted to talk about the community input for the MHSA fiscal year 2022-2023 Update and Innovation Plan. She is requesting for an FSP program for immigrants, refugees, and undocumented population – the FSP would help everyone in Merced County with providing linguistic and culturally appropriate mental health services for all ages; to help people adjust to American life, navigate and get resources, to get citizenship and legal help; to adjust to housing, school, work and healthcare; and to provide access to transportation. To provide flex funding and money to help undocumented that are refugees and immigrants with economic hardship. She is asking for another FSP for the LGBTQ community – this program would serve the whole Merced County, provide name and gender change services, hormone services, and surgery letters. To provide transportation to resources that are available in San Francisco and Sacramento, providing housing and helping LGBTQ find access to school, work and healthcare, and to help them fight against discrimination. To help them navigate their surgery and laser hair removal surgeries. She is asking for prevention services and prevention programs to focus on drug and alcohol prevention, and to be located in rural areas providing a youth center at Delhi, Livingston, Winton, Atwater, Santa Nella, Le Grand and Planada. To provide mentorships, field trips, to teach life skills, and

to provide actual youth center there. She is requesting for BHRs and MHSA programs and non-profits to have a family advocate, client advocate, youth advocate, LGBTQ advocate, undocumented advocate, and formerly incarcerated advocate, and to be required that they have it and for every program to have it. She noted that it's important to have empathy to provide a connection and have representation. Pangcha noticed that a lot of the programs actually have probation officers on their locations such as CSOC and SUD, and she noticed that there is a police officer in the Livingston school site where the mental health is provided there. She noticed it looks like a school to prison pipeline and the mental health programs look like a mental health program to prison pipeline. Pangcha is requesting to kick out the probation officers and law enforcement off of school sites and mental health sites. She is proposing that instead programs have family and client advocates – they should be having LGBTQ advocates, undocumented advocates, and formerly incarcerated advocates for people who are falling through the cracks.

Nancy Reding, community member, would like to support everything that Pangcha commented on. Her concern, and as a United Methodist Woman for California and Nevada, is that they have seen that when they have law enforcement on campus, usually the repercussion is through the justice system instead of the mental health system. She repeated that she supports everything that was said prior to her.

Fernando said to keep in mind that this is notices to the public, so at this point we are not discussing or putting stuff on the agenda.

Pangcha noted that as a board member, Fernando can motion to this to be on a future agenda. Fernando agreed that it could be placed in a future agenda if it is said so by the members of the board. He noted that Sharon Jones is on this call and minutes are being taken and recorded. Sharon confirmed that it would be added to upcoming meetings for discussion.

V. Chair's Report

No report.

VI. BHRS Report

Sharon Jones noted that she would cover the 3 top things. One of the top things they are working on at Behavioral Health & Recovery Services is upgrading our electronic health record system with the hope that it will have capabilities for more meaningful data collection options and data report options. Most recently, contracting with Becon Health Options for screening of our access appointments on the front end of care and services. Also, a major initiative that Sharon has been included on and been working on since January is Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). They are due for their 4th deliverable and they have worked very collaboratively with Merced County Office of Education and many other providers in the community, and just building a trauma-informed network in Merced County, screening individuals for Adverse Childhood Experiences; not just screening but making sure we develop a clinical infrastructure to meet the needs of care. Along with trauma-informed care is looking at all of our practices and the way that we do things. Sharon noted that as Pangcha was speaking, it is so very important how we set up programs and of course it's great learning because many people come from a place of high Adverse Childhood Experiences scores and they have a trauma narrative or traumatic experiences. They have been working since January on Adverse Childhood Experiences with the hope of implementing Adverse Childhood Experiences screening, starting with our Children's System of Care and working along with Merced County school district – they are our primary partner with the grant. They are also a part of the Merced County Office of Education as the clinical provider. BHRS is moving forward – there are a lot of infrastructure and framework building that's happening. Also, the Mental Health Services Act capacity assessment has been completed and there will be a presentation at this particular committee as we move forward by Resource Development Associates (RDA). There will also be a presentation at the Behavioral Health Board, as well as a presentation at the Leadership meeting at BHRS. Sharon added that on September 29th they are having their Suicide Prevention event from 9 am – 12 pm here on campus at BHRS, 301 East 13th Street – they encourage individuals to come out. They would like the community to be a suicide safer community and would like for people to keep writing their story.

VII. Discussion on Community Program Planning Process

Sharon mentioned that most of the time she is the facilitator for the focus groups and often times the key informant interviews. She would like volunteers to host focus groups. They have done that in the past but now she wants people who will be willing to facilitate. Just trying to be a little more culturally specific and identify individuals who are ambassadors and trusted messengers for particular cultural groups to help her set up the focus groups. Of course, Sharon will be present because she always is, but just to have either a co-facilitator or a primary facilitator from our various cultural groups in our community. At this time she would like to ask and collect names of anyone who would be willing to do that. She shared that they are on track with their annual update – it is due to the state by June 30th of next year, but they really want to have enough time to really plan and collect the voices of this community. If anyone would like to be a facilitator of a group or host a focus group, she asked that they please speak now to take their name down and further establish it.

Fernando Granados said that Sierra Vista can help with the 0-5 and school aged children groups of parents – they can be conducted

in either English or Spanish.

Eli Sachse commented via chat: I believe that PEI funds can and should be allocated to compensate said facilitators.

Over the last six months from January, they have demonstrated great coming together working through that particular initiative with MCOE. There have been many key people that have participated in the discussions. Sharon would like the focus groups to be like that as well, where they come together and really hear the voices of the community and individuals support the effort.

Nancy noted that she had already spoken with Maria as far as getting a focus group for the LGBTQ community and probably having two different ones with different times.

What Sharon is trying to move forward is, individuals with lived experiences coming forward who are trusted messengers authentic to those communities to help out with the focus groups. Sharon is trying to diversify the groups a little bit more. Sharon asked to please reach out to Maria Orozco as they continue to set up focus groups. Sharon also asked everyone what they would like to see as part of the community planning. She noted that they have regulations of what they have to do and asked for suggestions.

VIII. Annual Update Focus Timeline

Sharon said that they are hoping to at least get their annual update completed, finished, and to the Board of Supervisors. It is still required to have public hearing and the 30 day posting. They need to have it to the state by June 30, 2022. All of these activities will lead up to the final report.

IX. Adverse Childhood Screening (ACEs)

Sharon encouraged everyone to join their network of care. The network of care is a compilation between Behavioral Health and Merced County Office of Education; many people are opting in. What they are trying to accomplish is programs and community providers screening for ACEs so that they can provide trauma-informed care. Most recently as part of the ACEs initiative, brochures are now available in Spanish, Hmong, and English.

X. Trauma Informed Care

The ultimate goal is to have all of their programs trauma-informed. We know that what is connected to trauma is toxic stress and an ongoing frequency of stress for many of the communities that they serve in Merced County. The goal is to have our programs trauma-informed, screening for ACEs, and also have a clinical framework to support individuals. As a part of the ACEs awareness initiative, they allowed them to invest in a clinical platform named "Practice Wise" that helps identify interventions that are needed for individuals and families. More to come on trauma-informed care, Adverse Childhood Experiences, and the previous agenda items pertaining to the community planning process. For Adverse Childhood Experiences, the 4th deliverable is due September 30th to the state. More to come on that. Sharon will share that when it is completed.

XI. LGBTQ Capacity Building Update

Simultaneously, the LGBTQ capacity building RFP has closed and a provider was selected. The provider selected is an LGBTQ collaborative from Stanislaus County. The key collaborative person is John Aguirre. They will begin work here in Merced County as a result of the RFP. They will have John come to this meeting and talk about the work, the service, and the care that he is providing here in Merced County. Sharon wanted to let everyone know that a provider was selected and the work and care is beginning.

Fernando Granados asked: with that, are they going to have offices here in Merced? Sharon said she is not sure; she will have to follow up John. She knows that he will be collaborating with the LGBTQ Alliance and she is not sure if he will have an office, but she will follow up and get that information. Fernando also asked: on the Practice Wise platform that was mentioned earlier, is there going to be training for those that are going to be utilizing that, or is that just for the department. Sharon explained that right now it's just for about 24 clinicians in the department. They will explore and see how they move it forward from there. Sharon will provide an update as we learn more. It is new to the department and they are learning but Sharon will follow up with information. Fernando noted that there are organizations that already do the ACEs screenings so he thinks it would be beneficial to get them to be part of that – also get the training to be able to utilize the Practice Wise platform. Sharon added that the goal of the Practice Wise platform is to build up clinical intervention and tools for clinicians or for providers. Sharon asked if anyone had any questions.

Once again, Sharon mentioned that if anyone is interested in hosting a focus group via Zoom or some electronic platform – it doesn't have to be face to face as she understands they are in the midst of a pandemic.

Nancy Reding commented that they go way back with focus groups and she really thinks Zoom is extremely beneficial across the board gathering people up. She noted that as a host they are reaching out and the facilitator is usually Sharon. She said the host's job is inviting. The flyers are made up by the staff of the Mental Health Services Act. It is very successful, Sharon does after hours because in their community it is easier for the working people to meet – for the LGBTQ community it has been successful.

Sharon agreed because what she loved was that even across county lines, people were able to speak out and support their perspective, and it really worked wonderful. Sharon knows the power of someone from that community with lived experience or from any community and encouraging people to come online. They could do it from their living room or their cellphone.

XII. Administrative Updates and Changes

In terms of Mental Health Services Act, Sharon is currently as the MHSA coordinator, she is currently providing group supervision for their interns that are coming from the different college settings who are in need of group supervisions and intern supervision. Also, she oversees the Strengthening Families program. For years the Strengthening Families program has needed a clinician after they meet with families and help them out. Now Sharon is supervising a clinician that will support prevention and early intervention – those are 2 of the changes in her area. There will also be a program manager – some of the changes that she supervises as well as the part of prevention and early intervention in Mental Health Services Act, and Workforce, Education and Training (WET). Sharon primarily does a lot of the training in the department so she hopefully this program manager will also be able to join in with some of the training and provide more clinical trainings as well and some of the work that Sharon does. Sharon also shared that Caitlin Haygood has been promoted to an analyst. She will be leaving the MHSA team under her supervision and she will be working in Adult System of Care. She wished Caitlin the best of luck in her promotion. Caitlin will still be here in the department but she will not be under Sharon's supervision on the MHSA team – she will probably still touch in different parts of it in the Adult System of Care. That is another change that is happening under Sharon's supervision. Sharon noted that CalAIM is a big one. They are trying to move forward with that so that they can meet all the state requirements and get up and implement it. That is one reason for hiring analysts and increasing the department with analysts because it is a huge infrastructure shift and change with a lot of requirements. Also, the electronic health records system is being updated – BHRS is working in collaboration with the Kingsview company and Credible. The hope is that they're moving to Credible electronic health records. They are having meetings this week regarding the possibilities with Credible. In terms of other administrative updates, the Transformational Equity Restart program was approved by Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability so they will be convening meetings to talk about and discuss the implementation of the transformational equity restart program.

Monica Adrian, Caring Kids, noted that Sharon mentioned that there is now a clinician for the Strengthening Families program. Monica asked: where does that funding come from? Sharon responded that it will be a combination of both medical realignment and prevention and early intervention. This is the clinician that was going to support the Older Adults System of Care – it was approved a while back. This clinician will be two-fold: supporting some of the prevention work with Strengthening Families and also Older Adults System of Care and PEARLS; providing consultation to PEARLS because that is one of the requirements under the PEARLS program that although there are lay workers, there needs to be a clinician who can provide clinical case review as well. It is going to be a combination, primarily a little bit of Older Adults System of Care and preventative stuff including PEARLS and Strengthening Families. Monica commented that it is her understanding that a clinician that was going to be added to the Caring Kids program also in collaboration with BHRS. Monica knows they haven't talked about that so she is just curious about the status of that. Sharon said that she will be having a conversation about that as well. That was a part of the last approved plan and the goal is to move it forward. Sharon clarified that this is a different clinician; Caring Kids will have a clinician specifically assigned to them. Sharon mentioned that she has been overseeing the Strengthening Families program since 2011 and one thing that comes up when there is more clinical expertise needed is that often times there is a lag time. The goal is that this clinician will be able to get the information and intervene right away as part of prevention. Monica said she will be waiting for Sharon's call. Sharon stated that they will convene a meeting soon to move it forward.

Fernando Granados commented that he wonders where they are going to get all of those clinicians, as there is such a shortage in the area so it is hard to get them. Sharon said she already has her clinician and agreed that there is a shortage but they just have to keep pressing in; there are clinicians. Sharon mentioned that she was fortunate enough to get one. Fernando is glad that Sharon is supervising students and that the department is looking to get students as growing clinicians. Sharon said it kind of goes along with her Workforce, Education and Training hat, as well as Diversity and Inclusion representing their population demographics and the people that live in Merced County.

XIII. Announcements

Sharon asked, out of the people that are represented on here, how many have already started screening for ACEs? She asked for responses via the chat box.

Monica Adrian said not yet.

Fernando shared that Sierra Vista obtained a SAMSHA grant for 5 years and they will be providing Mental Health First Aid both in Merced and Stanislaus County. If anyone is interested in Mental Health First Training, please let Fernando know, send him an email or contact the office so that trainings can be coordinated.

Sharon asked if they were doing the hybrid as well. She shared that she went through a long training where they can do a combination of face to face and virtual. Sharon asked Fernando if he was trained in that. Fernando explained that he is trained in it. However, right now they are just going to start with the in person small groups. He noted that the hybrid is very difficult to conduct and very challenging so they are going to start with in person. The grant starts September 30th. They currently do have one in Stanislaus but they were allowed to extend it to Merced County.

XIV. Possibilities and Success Stories

Sharon Jones said that she believes that the focus on trauma-informed care and Adverse Childhood Experiences if implemented appropriately would definitely lead to prove outcomes and community health. Of course, they will need to have the data to back it up but she really does feel that the focus of ACEs will help tremendously with their clinical interventions, the way they approach care with people; that has been one of Sharon's excitements this year working with MCOE and all the key partners and players in regards to bringing this to the forefront in the community.

XV. Next Steps

Fernando noted that there was no presentation today. He asked if presentations would restart next month. Sharon said that the next presentation should be the Transformational Equity Restart Program for next month. Fernando mentioned that if anyone is interested in doing a presentation to just reach out to Maria to be added to the calendar.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 28, 2021.

XVI. Adjourned

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 am.