

# Summary

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

August 26, 2021

9:00am

Behavioral Health & Recovery Services Department  
Teleconference via Zoom

### Present:

Sharon Jones, Nancy Reding, Monica Adrian, Jennifer Carr, Joana Castañeda, Vong Chang, John Ceccoli, Jose Chavez-Diaz, Caitlin Haygood, Alejandro Jurado, Patti Kishi, Monica Mata, Cindy Mattox, Christy McCammond, Marilyn Mochel, Ismael Muñoz, Julie Norton, Maria Orozco, Rocio Ortega, Steve Roussos, Sandra Sandoval, Anna Santos, Brian Sterkeson, Belle Vallador, Pangcha Vang, Siouxouyee Vue

### Presentation and Discussion:

*All Members*

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

#### II. Approval of Minutes

The approval of minutes for July 22, 2021 was motioned /seconded (Siouxouyee Vue /Sandra Sandoval) 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

Pangcha Vang, resident of Merced County, stated that she is requesting that at least one MHPA board meeting be scheduled at 6:00pm or later so that the unserved and underserved communities can participate and provide community input. She requested that MHPA programs and BHRS programs include and hire more family advocates, client advocates, youth advocates, and LGBTQ advocates, as well as formerly incarcerated advocates. She noted that we know it's important to have shared experiences of living with mental illnesses, but also that the LGBTQ community sometimes do not have family support – having an LGBTQ advocate is crucial. She mentioned that mass incarceration is impacting our unserved and underserved communities. Having someone who is a formerly incarcerated advocate, is very important so that we can share the trauma and heal from incarceration. Lastly, she provided community input for the Community Needs Assessment, since she knows the deadline is August 2021 for the MHPA 2021-2022 Update and Innovation Plan. Pangcha expressed the need for an FSP program for immigrants, refugees, and undocumented population, especially the Hispanic community. She requested for this program to be linguistically and culturally appropriate services for all ages and to help the undocumented, immigrant, and refugee population to adjust to American life, to navigate and get resources, to get citizenship and legal help, receive support for housing, school, work and healthcare with the CSS goal of reducing disparities and service access. She also requested a prevention program for staff who are formerly incarcerated gang members – for the staff to go to school and make presentations about gang prevention, to talk about the gang life, and to encourage the youth in schools to not join gangs. She requested for this prevention program to provide mentorship, field trips, life skills, and a youth center.

Nancy Reding suggested that Pangcha also take her requests for people to go into the schools or to address youth through Merced County Office of Education and the districts of which she wants to go into. Nancy does not believe there is leverage that BHRS has to make that happen – it is needed. She recommended reaching out to other agencies to allow that to happen. Pangcha thinks it could be possible. In Sacramento they have a program that provides prevention services to schools. Pangcha will look into it as well to see how this program could work.

Sharon noted that this was timely feedback because on the agenda they will talk about kicking off the next Community Planning Process. Sharon thanked Pangcha. Nancy commented that she is aware there will be upcoming focus groups.

Marilyn Mochel, NAMI Merced County, announced that NAMI Merced County, Root and Rebound, and Equity for All are collaborating to develop a survey for individuals who have been arrested and incarcerated during a mental health crisis and one for families whose loved ones have been incarcerated. They are doing individualized feedback about the survey but it will be something we will hear more about. Families and individuals continue to call NAMI and in their stories they experience a lot of trauma when this happens –

they are trying to get some more objective data to advocate for some significant change. Nancy requested the survey to be sent out to this committee.

## **V. Chair's Report**

No report.

## **VI. BHRS Report**

Sharon informed that business is as usual at BHRS. COVID is increasing due to the Delta variant but BHRS is still serving clients, of course using protective equipment. The big thing that is coming down from the state for all of the county mental health systems is CalAIM. Sharon noted that Fernando spoke about it in the last meeting. It is a whole restructuring of the system from how we're charting and what is happening with our clients. It is looking at the system, the billing system, etc. Sharon said we are looking at updating our infrastructure and electronic health record infrastructure. In terms of access to services, most recently a contract went to the board where Beacon Health Options will be doing the screenings – they are in the works of sorting all of that out. There is a collective County CalMHSA where they are working on renewing the electronic health records system. Peer-support certification is available where peer support specialists will be certified, be able to work with clients, and chart in the medical records – that is huge for California. Many other states have already reached that point. Sharon thinks even CalMHSA is working on peer certification as well, helping them have the competencies to work with clients. Sharon noted that Pangcha spoke to that during public comment - the value of lived experience resource, being in similar shoes or understanding the whole experience of the client. That is what they are doing at BHRS – trying to bring behavioral health care throughout the community. Sharon mentioned that there are stressors and suicide risk for young people and older adults. BHRS is trying to get the help to them, and trying to be innovative and creative to make sure that people's needs are being met.

Nancy Reding noted that many people have been asking her about when housing will be done and requesting more details. She asked if anyone could address if there are any updates or changes, or bring it to the future. Sharon thinks they can bring it to the future – the housing is being built by the city. The original location was MHSA bought property. It was 5 acres of land, an administrative location for BHRS which prior to that was a church. As a result of the city securing the property, 1.3 million dollars were received in community services and support funds for the purchase of that land. Sharon suggested having it as the next agenda item just for an update. Many people are interested in how they can possibly secure a department there. Sharon has several staff that have called for clients. If anyone has any information or feedback, it is more than welcome for them to share.

Monica Adrian, Caring Kids, shared that so many of the families that they are working with right now do not have stable housing and are staying in motels, couch surfing, or ultimately they're having to leave the county and go back to toxic relationships because there isn't a place for people to live who have young children. Monica noted that none of our facilities that house people who are displaced allow children, so they need something that will allow children. Sharon mentioned the Gateway Terraces if there is availability. Monica said there is not. Sharon added that in this area alone there's a housing shortage – there's hardly any occupancy due to the UC students and families. Housing is a very important topic right now. Monica shared that someone asked her the other day what would make a perfect home visit. She responded to them that our families need homes. Sharon agrees that they need that safe and secure space that they can call home. Sharon thinks that they probably do need to identify what is available out there because we are boots on the ground helping families and being unhoused or unsheltered is a major stressor.

Nancy commented that this does not land on Behavioral Health & Recovery Services; it lands on the county, it lands on the city, and the city has turned down years utilizing area that was apparently too close to the downtown area. Nancy asked everyone to please attend city council, Merced County meetings, as well as presses. She shared that being a third generation Mercedian this is nothing new – it was ignored hoping it would go away; it does not. Nancy thinks we need to address the homeless population, and to actively house them somehow. This is something she has been passionate about for so long and it continues. Monica Adrian thinks they need to keep talking about the definition of homelessness. Community members are concerned when they see people homeless on the street. She thinks it makes people uncomfortable to see that. People don't see those families with unstable housing so they don't realize the big of an issue that is. Monica wants to be that voice that it's much bigger than just people living on the streets.

## **VII. Program Presentation: Navigation Center**

Christy McCammond, Program Manager, and Jennifer Carr, Navigation Center Director, introduced themselves and presented a Power Point on the Merced County Navigation Center. The presentation provided information on the Navigation Center locations, funding, program scope, priority population, referral process, service location, numbers served annually, a census report put together by a Merced Rescue Mission consultant, and a success story.

During the presentation, Sharon Jones asked if the D Street shelter is now set up like a Navigation Center. Christy confirmed that it is true, it's actually named a Navigation Center as well – they offer case management services, participate in CES, and participate in

the entry of HMIS. The mission and vision of the Navigation Centers are similar. However, there are some few key differences. Sharon also asked who staffs the Navigation Center – is it multiple staff from blended agencies? Jennifer Carr explained that the staff is from the Merced County Rescue Mission, it is run by them. They do have population that has gone through the Rescue Mission programs and is now employed there helping the same population. Sharon asked, what part does Behavioral Health & Recovery Services play at the Navigation Center? Jennifer said that they have an on-site BHRS worker Monday-Friday, 8am - 5pm. They also have an HSA provider Monday-Friday, 8am - 5pm. They have partnered with different organizations. They have MOUs secured with them that come in and try to help. Golden Valley is on site as well every Wednesday. They have a Veterinarian that goes once a month and vaccinates animals, as they are a pet-friendly organization.

Jose Chavez-Diaz also asked: Who from Golden Valley Health Centers goes to the center? Jennifer said that she doesn't know his name, they just switched providers. He meets with them and connects them with the primary care provider. Jose also asked what kind of vaccines. Jennifer explained that the vaccines mentioned are for the pets. Jose asked if they would consider Golden Valley Health Centers, since they already have a provider there, to go there once in a while with the COVID-19 vaccine van for a couple hours a day every three days and see who wants the vaccine. Jennifer said that she has received a phone call from Staci in regards to the mobile vaccine bus and she was waiting for her to get back to her – that is something that they would definitely love to have there. They have had an organization out of Los Banos go and do a vaccination twice so far, both there and at the D Street Navigation Center. Jose thinks it would be good if Golden Valley Health Centers was the one going to the Navigation Centers because they got some of that million dollar something grant that Merced County received for COVID-19 vaccine assistance and advocacy. Jose said that Staci and their manager, Katilyn McIntire are the ones who actually organizes the vaccines in the mobile van – Jose will let them know about the Navigation Center and see if they want to contact Jennifer and plan something for that.

Jose noted that GVHC is in the community, even though COVID cases have increased. Regardless of that they are still in the community going face to face of course using PPE with the homeless community and the Latino community. Jose asked if any homeless member can go to the Navigation Center or if they have to be involved with Merced County Behavioral Health. Jennifer said it is prioritized for anybody from the city of Merced, with exceptions through New Direction. Jennifer further explained about their referral process with Turning Point through New Direction. Jennifer noted that they went through a beautification project due to the feedback that they received at the beginning. Many said that it looked a lot like an institution and the homeless did not want to come in because of that; they do have a metal detector security for safety. They really want them to feel welcome coming in to the Navigation Center so that they could help them.

Nancy asked if Jennifer could share her contact information with everyone via the chat for any further questions. If anyone needs more information about the regional plan they can reach out to Christy. They would love this group to have a chance as a stakeholder to review and give contributions towards it. Christy asked if there was anyone who could provide more information on families and underserved populations.

Lastly, Christy mentioned that within the regional plan and within the Navigation Centers, and all of the partners who help people experiencing homelessness (PEH), they are developing a county wide glossary of terms. This will be important for all teams to reference so that when we crossover groups we can speak the same language. She would love to have the input of stakeholders from this group on the glossary. Christy will be providing that to Sharon to share with this group and get any feedback. They want to use this glossary not only for their regional plan but also for other documents and other communication devices. Christy compared this glossary to a book that is sitting in the library shelf that we can grab to use in a range of forum or media, that we can rely on, update over time, clarify definitions, and so that as Merced County we all know what they mean and can apply to any initiatives and applications for funding; there are a broad range of uses for this glossary.

### **VIII. Presentation and Discussion on MHSA Community Planning Process**

Sharon Jones introduced the MHSA Community Planning Process. The virtual Behavioral Health Policy Forum and Suicide Prevention Month timeline will be sent out to the group, as well as the Power Point presentation. Sharon informed that they would be kicking off our Mental Health Services Act Community Planning Process. This Community Planning Process is for an annual update to the original 3 year plan – this will be the annual update fiscal year 2022-2023, a requirement under Mental Health Services Act. It is based out of the welfare and institutions code (WIC), the California code of regulations Title IV CCR. MHSA is required to provide an annual update to the state, the Department of Health Care services and Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability. This annual update has to receive the approval from our Board of Supervisors. The update is to let stakeholders know how we are spending MHSA funds – this also includes several categories of approved programs: Community Services & Support, Workforce Education & Training, Prevention & Early Intervention, and Innovative Programs. This annual update that comes as a result of our Community Planning Process must include a lot of information. It starts with the community stakeholder process where individuals give their feedback either through community stakeholder cards, focus groups, key informant interviews, and often times through a

world café where everyone is brought together to discuss several topics important to MHSA.

Sharon explained that the stakeholder process is inclusive of alcohol and drug providers, health care organizations, representatives who represent veterans, social services agency, behavioral health, law enforcement, etc. – they can be at the table for MHSA because MHSA is about expanding services for individuals with severe mental illness. As a part of the MHSA community stakeholder process, it is really trying to drill down to the needs of the unserved, underserved and inappropriately served. They are trying to move healthcare forward to reduce costly treatment, so that individuals can live thriving lives, and have more of a preventative stand. As a part of this, many have participated – at the end of the community planning process there is a behavioral health board public hearing. We are working with the stakeholders, we are listening to the voices, and trying to do the best as resources allow. As a reminder, the annual update has to be posted for 30 days for public comment and feedback, there has to be a Behavioral Health Board public hearing, and it has to go to the Board of Supervisors to be approved. After the Board of Supervisors we have about 30 days to send it to the state for their review and feedback. MHSA funds are used to pay for MHSA programs. The plan has to have not only expenditures but also projections on spending that may be coming up.

Sharon stated that every county has to do an MHSA plan annually because every county in California received MHSA funding. Sharon added that other important interests are involved as well such as the social services agency, law enforcement, and education. Central to the planning are adults, TAYs, children, and seniors that are living with severe mental illness, caretakers of severe mental illness, and diverse communities – it is an intersection across the board. Sharon usually facilitates all the focus groups, but this year she would like members of this community or of this committee to take the lead and help. As a part of this kick off, the council will receive a timeline that maps out everything as well as the presentation she is speaking from. Sharon encouraged individuals to attend the policy forum. Sharon noted that focus groups are currently ongoing – it was decided to have focus groups ongoing, but they will have special focus groups as well.

Sharon asked if anyone would like to host a focus group and be the facilitator to please email Maria Orozco so that it can be set up as part of the timeline. Each year is about hearing the voices of our community to try to move community health forward as it relates to behavioral health care. It is all interconnected: physical health care, behavioral health care, and spirituality. As we go through the community planning process there will be information in each agenda in regards to how we're doing, any updates, and what the voice of the community is saying. She noted that all of this is continued on as resources allow. If there are any questions, please forward them to Maria Orozco – Sharon is open to answering them and if she is not able to she is open to seek who is the best person to answer them. Sharon asked everyone to join her in kicking off the annual update 2022-2023 community program planning process. This will be her thirteenth year with the department. She also invited everyone to join her in facilitating focus groups.

Nancy Reding thinks it's such a wonderful idea to have specific focus groups so the majority of the people there are discussing a need that is so important for them. She shared that they have done that for the LGBTQ for the last 3 years – it is wonderful asking for facilitators to be there is marvelous - she is really impressed. Sharon noted that they just need the big voice of the community to come forward. She would love to have facilitators who carry lived experience and the voice of the community. Nancy asked if there will be someone taking notes or will that be responsibility of the facilitator? Sharon explained that we would be taking the notes.

#### **IX. Development of Timeline for Completion of MHSA Annual Update FY 2022-2023**

Information will be sent out to the group regarding the timeline.

#### **X. CHBDA Virtual Behavioral Health Policy Forum**

Information will be sent out regarding the policy forum.

#### **XI. Suicide Prevention Month**

Sharon Jones announced the Suicide Prevention event at BHRS on September 29<sup>th</sup>. She mentioned that individuals are being invited to partner at the event. Caitlin Haygood has developed a form where individuals can sign up. This will be sent out as well.

#### **XII. Extended MHSA-Related COVID-19 Flexibilities**

Sharon briefly discussed about MHSA-Related COVID-19 Flexibilities.

#### **XIII. ACEs Network of Care**

Sharon shared that they are working on the ACEs Inc. network of care screening for ACEs in collaboration with BHRS, Merced County Office of Education, and many other community-based and providers in our community because that is a wonderful thing for Merced County. Not just screening but making sure that protective factors are in place for families then we're linking them and connecting them to resources to reduce stressors and mitigate toxic stress, which we know kills and lead to chronic disease.

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

No administrative updates and changes.

**XV. Announcements**

Nancy Reding reminded everyone that on September 18<sup>th</sup> there will be Pride 2021. It will be downtown from 3pm – 8pm. Anybody interested in having a table please go on the website at Merced LGBTQ Alliance – on the front page it has Pride information and a drop down menu is available for more vendor and tabling information. Nancy shared her contact information and the website link.

Pangcha Vang announced that on October 18<sup>th</sup> there will be a city council meeting on ARF (American Rescue Fund) – money to help families recover from COVID-19. This meeting is very important because the city council will listen to where you think the money should be spent. It is 27 million dollars and this money could be used towards youth jobs, affordable housing, or even premium pay for low wage workers. It is very important to show up to this meeting and voice how we think that this money should be used to help the unserved and underserved communities. Pangcha will post the date, time and location in the chat. Nancy agreed that it is important, along with the redistricting. They need people to attend; they need to move the red lines that have happened. She suggested that if they have concerns and want to see changes to get involved.

**XVI. Possibilities and Success Stories**

Agenda item tabled.

**XVII. Next Steps**

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 23, 2021.

**XVIII. Adjourned**

The meeting adjourned at 9:59am