

Summary

Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Ongoing Planning Council Special Meeting

March 26, 2020
9:00 a.m.
Teleconference

Present:

Monica Adrian, Norma Barragan, Clovia Barboza, Vong Chang, Fernando Granados, Leticia Guillen, Caitlin Haygood, Sharon Jones, Megan Lawson, Cindy Mattox, Rebecca McMullen, Marilyn Mochel, Ismael Munoz, Maria Nava, Jenna Nunes, Maria Orozco, Nancy Reding, Steve Roussos, Eli Sachse, Sandra Sandoval, Anna Santos, Ge Thao, Paul Thao, Griselda Vazquez, Tatiana Vizcaino

Presentation and Discussion:

All Members

I. Call to Order / Roll Call

II. Approval of Minutes

The approval of minutes for February 20, 2020 was motioned/seconded (Nancy Reding/Jenna Nunes) and carried.

III. Update Planning Council Contact List

Sharon Jones mentioned that this is an ongoing task, and will be updated as members join the meeting.

IV. Notice to the Public

Jenna Nunes with Sierra Vista informed the group that their ISN-Y program is still taking referrals. Staff are still working and all their services are being done through telehealth.

Tatiana Vizcaino with NAMI is working from home, but still responding to emails and phone calls. Their office is exploring options for doing meetings through zoom, in the coming weeks.

Leticia Guillen with Livingston Community Health stated that her office is continuing the IPC program, so they are still taking referrals. The Cultural Broker outreach is at a halt at the moment.

Monica Adrian with Caring Kids wanted to let everyone know that they are here to provide family support right now. They are looking into somehow having online play groups to help with social connections.

Nancy Reding, on behalf of the Merced LGBTQ Alliance, announced that all upcoming events have been cancelled.

V. Director's Report

Agenda item tabled.

Sharon Jones reminded the group that the new Director, Genevieve Valentine, will be starting on Monday, March 30, 2020.

VI. Discussion on MHSa Program Update 2019-2020

Sharon Jones gave a MHSa Program Update 2019-2020 PowerPoint presentation, which was previously sent out to the group. Sharon talked about our guiding principles for the Ongoing Planning Council. She mentioned that Merced County's poverty rate increased to 27.4% according to the U.S. Census. The 2019 Merced CoC point-in-time count showed a total of 607 persons were identified as meeting the HUD definition of homeless on January 24, 2019. Of those counted, 285 persons were unsheltered. She talked about the purpose of prevention in mental health, and how it involves reducing risk factors or stressors, building protective factors and skills, and increasing support. Sharon mentioned that a part of capacity building was to leverage \$4,000,000 in funds to help support the Homeless Navigation Center. The center is going to focus on prevention and early intervention efforts for homeless individuals and provide mental health and substance use disorder outreach services.

Monica Adrian asked if the funds are being used to actually pay for housing for individuals. Sharon Jones said it is going to be used for a combination of things. The CEO's office will be implementing how the funds are spent.

Monica Adrian wanted to know if families with children will be able to benefit from the services. Sharon Jones said she would have to get more information on that. Monica Adrian asked that **it be noted that there is a need for services for families with children to be met** with this new homeless navigation support system. Sharon Jones said she will have someone give a presentation on it, when the information is available. Anna Santos wanted to know what definition of homeless we are going to be encompassing or are we going to be creating our own definition of what homelessness looks like. Sharon Jones said if she had to guess, she believes it would be the HUD definition. Anna Santos asked if the center would be serving families that are doubled up or "couch surfing." Sharon Jones responded that it would be individuals that are already homeless and individuals that are at risk of being homeless. Sharon Jones added that technically, when they are doubled up, they may still be at risk of being homeless.

Steve Roussos wanted to add to what Anna said, when we are looking at homelessness around the country, and people are looking at the disparities in homelessness related to culture and language, what we find not just in Merced, but all over the country is that in communities that are not English speaking, they are often missed as homeless because of the barriers of being afraid of being kicked out of their cultural system. He believes the HUD definition is lacking immensely on reaching that disparity and unless we formally do something in Merced County to add to the definition and clarify that, we wouldn't actually be a part of the navigation center. He thinks we need to be a little more proactive and really put ourselves out on the line for that. Sharon Jones said that it is not 100%, but she knows that in the literature she has read, it was HUD and individuals that are at risk and it has to be culturally responsive.

Nancy Reding asked if we are first talking about homelessness and then going on, or are we just talking about prevention and early intervention methods. Sharon Jones said we are talking about a combination of both. In the priority population of individuals who are homeless, but looking through the lens of prevention and early intervention for individuals and families. Nancy added that when she reviewed the budget for prevention and early intervention, she was informed in 2019 that Merced Lao Family and the Youth Leadership Institute (YLI) received together \$30,000, but when she looks at the budget, she does not see the \$8,000 for Lao Family. First question, are they receiving this money for 2019-2020, and if they are, is it somewhere in the budget that she is not seeing. Sharon Jones said, yes they are receiving it. Youth Leadership Institute received \$22,000 and Merced Lao Family received \$8,000, which is an expansion of their Cultural Broker program. Nancy Reding stated she does have some concerns about grouping it with their cultural broker money because she thinks it needs to be specified as to what is being done for the LGBTQ community. Nancy Reding also wanted to comment on the \$4,000,000 budget, which almost \$500,000 is going to administration. That leaves us with \$3,500,000 to be used. It's less than 75% being spent on the LGBTQ community in Merced. Nancy added that they have done focus groups and they want to see money for direct services and prevention for the LGBTQ community. Nancy Reding also has concern that the Merced LGBTQ Alliance was not consulted by any one of the programs. She recommends that for 2020-2021 that there is a LGBTQ Alliance board member on the selection and decision committee. Sharon Jones thanked Nancy for her feedback.

Eli Sachse wanted to add on to Nancy's concerns. He understands that YLI and Merced Lao Family got this money set aside for LGBTQ outreach and prevention, but when he looks at the Annual Update, he sees that Merced Lao Family noted zero LGBTQ contacts. Sharon Jones explained that the work has just begun. The way that the Merced Lao community works is that it starts with engaging the leaders and providing training for the leaders. That was started successfully and then it will move on to further outreach in their communities and program system. They have already started training 40 or 50 community leaders. With local county government agencies, there is a process to get contracts to the Board of Supervisors. The work can't begin until the Board of Supervisors signs off on it. The current data in the Annual Update is from 2018-2019. In the next Annual Update, which is the Three Year Plan, there should be widespread data to show what work has been done.

Eli Sachse stated, so groups don't have to prove that they have LGBTQ contacts in order to receive this money. Sharon Jones said the way it works is that when a MHSA contactor receives funding for a particular scope of work, the scope of work begins, and then there is a whole year of work and then we receive quarterly reports that are ongoing for that year. At the end of the year, all of that four quarters worth of data is reported out in the Annual Update. At that time you can see how many individuals were served. The work has just begun and we are going to see what the results are.

Eli Sachse asked if Sharon Jones has received one of the reports yet. Sharon Jones responded No, because it just began this year. Quarterly reports are due now. We are going to receive at least four quarterly reports and then it will go into the next Annual Update.

Eli Sachse asked what kind of training has been provided to the elders and leaders. Paul Thao from Merced Lao Family said their program is designed to provide information to the community leaders. The Hmong parents aren't that aware of the LGBTQ group, so they want to give them knowledge and to let them know in this community you have to respect and work together. They have helped setup workshops for the leaders. Dr. Sang is a psychologist that knows about the LGBTQ group. He provides information on how we talk to the people and how we approach them. This is where we started and this is the first round. We don't have the experience to provide directly, but the information is provided to the community and family members, to respect the group.

Eli Sachse asked if Dr. Sang is an expert in LGBTQ outreach. Sharon Jones asked Eli if they could talk offline and get his questions answered.

Fernando Granados reminded the group that today's discussion was about the MHSA Program Update and we need to stay on task and discuss what is on the agenda.

Anna Santos wanted to add, in regards to the data collection for prevention and early intervention, for homelessness, has Sharon Jones been reaching out to the committee from the CoC, and people that have already gathered data, in regards to Merced and are we partnering with any of those committees. Sharon Jones said that this is in conjunction with the county wide effort with the CEO's office, Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, and other agencies.

Monica Adrian asked if this was an expectation from the state, that these MHSA funds be used for this project. She wanted to know if this is something that every county is doing. Sharon Jones said she can't speak for what other counties are doing, but every Mental Health Plan gets MHSA funding. This is a strategy that Merced County is trying to move forward.

Monica Adrian said she is curious as to where the \$4,000,000 is coming from and if it's available now, where has it been. Sharon Jones replied that most recently the state changed how they are doing their calculations for spending. For many years they have allowed MHSA to keep money in the coffers and hold onto it, now the state is not allowing that anymore, so they have activated their reversion. These are one time funds that are going to revert if an action is not made. If it's not on the revenue and expenditure report, then it's going to revert.

VII. Administrative Updates and Changes

Sharon Jones said the big thing right now is getting our Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Update approved on March 31 with the Board of Supervisors meeting.

Sharon Jones announced that our Innovative Strategist Network (ISN) is looking at opening up to the community more. The Program Update has been posted on the website for the 30 day public review. There is a comment form there, if you have further comments, please fill it out and send it to us.

VIII. Possibilities and Success Stories

Leticia Guillen from Livingston Community Health said that still being able to access the community through telehealth is a big success.

IX. Next Steps

Sharon Jones said we will be arranging for a Public Hearing and sending out the information once the date is confirmed. Fernando Granados asked that we setup a meeting for how COVID-19 is affecting our programs. He also asked if we could get an update from the department as to what the plan is and how this might affect funding for our MHSA programs.

X. Adjourned

Meeting adjourned at 9:55 a.m.