

# Summary

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

April 27, 2023

9:00 am – 10:00 am

Behavioral Health & Recovery Services Department  
Teleconference via Zoom

### Present:

Sharon Jones, Bacilia Mendez, Cindy Mattox, Nicole Duarte, Monica Adrian, Fernando Granados, Maria Colomer, Jesse Ornelas, Nikki Carrasco, Heydi Herrera, Rebecca McMullen, Iohana Tapia, Ye Thao, Katalina Zambrano, Zeus Baldevia, Lizbeth bravo, Vong Chang, Eve Clinton, Omejia Dotson, Daniel Garibay, See Her, Jason Her, Patti Kishi, Tony Lor, Marilyn Mochel, Jenna Nunes, PIA, Kimiko Vang, Laura Weil, Jewel Wise, Ursula Vasquez,

### Presentation and Discussion:

*All Members*

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

#### II. Approval of Minutes

Jenna Nunes made a motion to approve the minutes from March 30, 2023, and Monica Adrian seconded. The motion was approved.

#### III. Update Planning Council Contact List

Sign in with your full name and the agency you are representing, so that we can keep a record of your attendance for this meeting.

#### IV. Notice to the Public

Sierra Vista does have the SAMHSA grant to provide Mental Health First Aid to youth and adults in Merced County. If any organizations are interested in Mental Health First Aid training, please contact Fernando Granados with Sierra Vista for scheduling.

#### V. Chair's Report

No report was given but the chair encourages everyone to read the email Sharon sent out earlier last week regarding the MHSa priorities.

#### VI. BHRS Report

Director Kimiko Vang introduced herself to the council. Kimiko's focus in the next few years will be that everything done with BHRS utilizes equity, diversity, and cultural humility. Whether through customer service or in the practices we offer to our community members. Kimiko is excited to partner and hear from everyone.

Sharon shared that BHRS has transitioned to the Credible EHR. The Winton clinic is expanding and getting up to speed. There is a discussion regarding CARE Court and CalAIM. There has been a recent fiscal audit and we are preparing for the August Triennial Medi-Cal Audit. The Peer Support Specialist Groups started Monday. These meetings will be bi-weekly from 3:30 PM-5:00 PM. This group helps support Peer Support Specialists and assists with their certification. Also, the BHRS mask mandate has been lifted. Beginning in the new fiscal year this council meeting will resume in-person meetings.

#### VII. Discussion on COVID-19 and the Impact on MHSa Programs

**Monica-** Merced County Office of Education will continue to provide some services that were not offered before Covid-19.

**Jenna-** Sierra Vista offers parenting classes and supports through the iMatter Program. This has proven to be beneficial in connecting parents from various locations. For youth in the program, a lot of the referrals are for social skills due to the impact of COVID. The youth are lacking in social skills and friendship building.

**Vong-** Turning Point reported that with a low-functioning population, they must be very strategic in terms of how services are carried out. A lot of members cannot do telehealth or access virtual platforms. Turning Point still tries to reach out to them and render services should they be in quarantine with COVID. Emphasis is placed on advocating for the clientele. Staff have also returned to the office. Everyone is mindful and protective of each other's personal space.

**Rebecca-** Aspiranet provided many telehealth services despite being a home-based service. The mask mandate has been lifted as of April 3<sup>rd</sup>. There is no longer a requirement to screen clients or families before sessions. Also, staff are no longer required to wear masks unless there is an identified outbreak in the office. Staff are still asked to mask if they are exposed and when experiencing symptoms asked to test/quarantine for a certain number of days. Things are back to the status quo.

**Pia-** Golden Valley Health Centers has had many requests to continue telehealth services. The reasons are transportation and the comfort of the home.

**Heydi-** COVID has helped in expanding access. Most behavioral health patients are not ready to return to in-person appointments. Telehealth appointments have helped the no-show rate. Masks at the clinics are optional for staff.

**Nikki-** Healthy House is still tabling with COVID-19 home test kits, masks, sanitizers, and booster/vaccine location information. This is a part of their Health Ambassador Grant with Sierra Health Foundation. These materials are usually distributed where free food is given out to the homeless such as 4Life Church every Monday.

**Fernando-** COVID made us look at how we are unprepared to provide services at a much larger level. We saw the numbers and need to increase. There is a shortage of staff. Now we are forced to look at innovative ways to deliver services but became aware that we lack preparation to provide services at the needed level.

**Kimiko-** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, equity issues within the community have been brought to light. Some do not have access to the vaccine as readily available as others. Not everyone has access to the necessary technology for telehealth appointments or the Internet. So how did that impact programs and what you provide to the community?

**Sharon-** There were a lot of lessons with COVID-19. I witnessed a lot of personal resiliency and great commitment from everyone to help the people that we serve. Like Fernando said, being very innovative. Innovation was pushed to the forefront. We will continue to look at where we are and some of the ways we served people during that time.

#### **VIII. May is Mental Health Awareness Month**

Behavioral Health and Recovery Services will have a large event on Wednesday, May 24<sup>th</sup> in celebration of May Mental Health Awareness Month. There will be vendors and giveaways. We will also be sending weekly uplifting emails.

#### **IX. MHS Community Program Planning Process Update**

Community Program Planning Process is still underway.

#### **X. Focus Group feedback.**

We have had about eleven focus groups. There is an upcoming focus group with Jenna regarding the education system. The feedback has been the need to come together in unity to serve the rural community. Helping families at the grassroots level is working well and individuals are mobilizing in their communities. With COVID-19 and the recent flooding, the community is banding together. When we pull our resources together, we strengthen our approach to helping people. Also, health navigators have been prominent in the feedback. More help for families when they go to medical appointments. A greater understanding of the stigma and terminology that comes with mental health.

#### **XI. Posting of Draft Three-Year Plan**

Kudos to Cindy Mattox, Analyst who posted the three-year plan on Monday. There is a thirty-day public comment and review. Please check it out and give feedback. At the end of the thirty-day review will be the Behavioral Health Board public hearing. The press release is to be sent out by Mike North.

#### **XII. MHS Modernization Plan**

The MHSA Modernization Plan is proposed to be on the ballot in 2024. A part of it is statewide fiscal transparency and accountability for all public and private payers for behavioral health. It will also look at the percentages for the three core areas of MHSA. The California State Association of Counties (CSAC) wants to convene counties and the diverse teams that have been working with the MHSA over the years. Also, while increasing transparency and retaining the flexibility that we have at the stakeholder level. A huge focus is to sustain funding for our local services. Maximizing innovation and making sure the prudent reserve has the correct amount of reserves are also key components. Sharon will give more updates on the MHSA modernization as more is released.

**Fernando-** One of the biggest things that I noticed in the proposal is the PEI portion. It is specific to what the proposal entails. We need to be proactive and start looking at what does that look like for our county. What programs will be most affected so we can start having conversations regarding our priorities? 2024 is right around the corner, if we are looking at the removal or revamping of programs those conversations need to happen now. In some of our programs, there is an opportunity for us to bill health plans. If that is a possibility within some of our programs, we should have a conversation on how we can maximize funding, so it does not all come from the MHSA funding.

**Kimiko-** We here at BHRS along with CBHD are monitoring the progress of this proposal very closely. Things have changed since the first time the proposal was revealed. The State and the Governor's office are gathering feedback from other stakeholders. We are also looking internally as to what kind of impact this could have on our MHSA programs. PEI is very crucial to our community. The State is asking us if this were to pass, to look at our needs and reprioritize based on the three categories. Looking at the kind of impact this could have is what we are working on. We do want to have conversations with all of you regarding the impact on the community. Like Fernando said, we do not want to panic yet at this point. This is just a part of that proposal, there are still many months before it could come to the ballot. In that process still, it is important to gather feedback from all of you and the community. Look at what our needs are in Merced County and how we can leverage billing Medi-Cal under CalAIM. Looking at all the resources we have access to benefit the community. This is very much in its infancy in terms of conversation. We will be involving you all in the conversations moving forward.

*Fernando stated it would be beneficial if letters are written as an agency or as individuals, to our congressmen and representatives regarding this potential ballot proposal. The more that we can get our voices heard at that level the better. Fernando asked Kimiko if she could pass along that information to any lobbyist or representatives she meets. Kimiko said absolutely.*

### **XIII. Legislation**

Some assembly bills are also getting attention. AB845 Behavioral Health for older adults is looking at having an adult behavioral health administrator at the state level as well as tracking data. SB551 would amend MHSA by requiring each county to use at least 20% of the prevention and early intervention to provide direct services on school campuses in collaboration with local education agencies. AB1636 would require the commission to develop, implement, and oversee a public and comprehensive framework for tracking and reporting spending on mental health programs and services from all major fund sources and of the program- and service-level and statewide outcome data, as specified. AB289 is regarding mental health services representation. This bill would require that stakeholders have sufficient participation of individuals representing diverse viewpoints, including representatives from youth from historically marginalized communities, representatives from organizations specialized in working with underserved racially and ethnically diverse communities, and representatives from LGBTQ+ communities. Lastly, calling to amend the welfare and institution code 5848 would include youth and youth mental health organizations among those stakeholders required to be within the MHSA stature. PEI priorities came out yesterday from the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission. This is the time to stay informed and I will bring to you anything that I can.

**Fernando-** Bill AB665 the minor consent bill would allow individuals twelve and over to consent to their mental health by only meeting one criterion if they are mature enough to participate in services. That is something that will be huge for many of our organizations.

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

Julianne Sims is the new Assistant Director. Adrian Angel is the new Compliance Officer. Sharon Mendonca has retired and is no longer with BHRS.

**Kimiko-** We are working on opening up recruitment for the Assistant Director position. Kit Chang is now the Division Director of the Justice and Community Integration (JCI) division. Leticia Servin is now the Program Manager for JCI and Liliana Pullido is the Program Manager for Quality Performance Management (QPM). There is one vacant Division Director position in 24 hours as well as one vacant Program Manager position in 24 hours. In the meantime, Kit is covering the 24-hour division as Division Director. We are filling up those vacancies as quickly and effectively as possible. We are so happy that we have new team members as part of the Leadership team. We are feeling the gap now with Sharon Mendoca retiring, she served BHRS and Merced County for so many years. She has had an impactful career here, and it will be difficult to fill her shoes. We will be opening the recruitment very soon and hopefully going through the hiring process and getting a new Assistant Director.

**XV. Announcements**

**Jenna-** We will be hosting several stigma events at high schools and elementary schools in the month of May. We will be reaching out to many of you to attend and hold a table at our events. If we have not reached out to you and you would like to participate, I will put my email in the chat. These are very well-attended events. We are promoting stigma, LGBTQ+, students with disabilities, and bullying. We want all agencies to be involved. We involve the school leadership team. Please contact me if you would like to attend. Events will be at school sites during lunch in Gustine, Atwater, Merced, Los Banos, and Planada.

**Rebecca-**The Youth Crisis Stabilization Unit is officially opened as of this Monday. Aspiranet took on the previous contract that STARS had. It has been a work in progress for the past few months. We only have one clinician position open left. We have already had three clients. It is great to see it be utilized. Our staff is going to be doing the event in May with BHRS.

**XVI. Possibilities and Success Stories**

Reports are due to Cindy at 5:00 pm, May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Lao New Year is this Saturday, and it will be a large event. The event is scheduled from 9:00 am – 9:00 pm.

**XVII. Next Steps**

We will convene next month at the same time.

**XVIII. Adjournment**

9:55 AM