

# Summary

## Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Cultural Competency Committee

June 18, 2020  
10:05 am – 11:00 am  
Behavioral Health & Recovery Services  
301 East 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Merced

### Present:

Joy Carvey, Alyssa Castro, Vong Chang, Jacqueline Coulter, Debra Counts, Fernando Granados, Caitlin Haygood, Sharon Jones, Cindy Mattox, Patricia Medina, Marilyn Mochel, Maria Orozco, Nancy Reding, Steve Roussos, Anna Santos, Ralph Silva Rodriguez, Ker Thao, Genevieve Valentine, Griselda Vazquez

### Presentation and Discussion:

*All Members*

#### I. Check-in/Conocimiento

The group completed self-introductions, stating names and agencies. Sharon asked that those whose name was not called during role to email Maria Orozco to confirm their attendance.

#### II. Approval of Minutes

The approval of minutes for May 21, 2020, was motioned/seconded (Fernando Granados/Marilyn Mochel) and carried.

#### III. Cultural Competence Guiding Definition

Sharon Jones asked for committee's thoughts on lifelong learning and self-reflection in terms of a guiding definition. Fernando Granados stated that in order to be culturally competent and be culturally responsive you have to look within yourselves and conduct a self-assessment, ask yourself what you are expecting from others in terms of cultural competence and where you stand. Patricia Medina suggested ethical processes in regards to cultural competence should be included in a definition. Patricia offered an example of what incorporating cultural competence into ethical practices would look like. She suggested asking yourself if you are bringing biases or stereotypes into interactions with consumers and asking how you can approach and define things in a way that is culturally responsive. Sharon Jones shared the tenants of practical diversity, which included finding out what your messages are, not being judgmental, and not treating people the way you do not want to be treated. Marilyn Mochel stated that engaging in cultural competency places us in the role of listener and learner. It is more than reflection; it is listening and learning from, in this context, the client. Steve Roussos asked is there room in the definition for incorporating the word "advocacy" in the definition, as someone who is cultural competency be, not just understanding but advocating when they see an injustice. Sharon Jones agreed that advocating is an important part of mitigating the power imbalances.

Steve Roussos asked if it would it be helpful to incorporate forgiveness into the definition of cultural competence as important to the process of healing. Is that part of cultural competency? Nancy Reding stated that cultural incompetency is when you need forgiveness. Marilyn Mochel suggested incorporating privilege and acknowledging historical trauma, including oppression and abuse, in addition to power differentials. Marilyn stated that it is important to know about the group you are working with, but also know who you are in relation to that group and address it in some way. Sharon Jones shared about the concept of Emancipation Circles. She stated that forgiveness and healing are very important to the healing process and, as a committee we are trying to come humbly, in a non-judgmental manner, to help people get healing. A huge part of cultural competence is reducing toxic stress that individuals from cultural communities go through, that leads to chronic diseases; it is part of building community health and safety and security in the community.

Alyssa Castro from YLI stated that it is important to acknowledge, when talking about cultural competence, sometimes people act as a gatekeeper of knowledge. It is important to acknowledge that that should not happen, that there are always opportunities to learn from intersectional groups and work with a plethora of communities, not only with one cultural group

even if that group is your target audience. The people you engage might identify within another marginalized group. The importance of intersectionality and that one group does not own the knowledge of a specific community should be acknowledged.

Sharon Jones agreed that intersectionality is very important. She stated that we tend to speak for the communities we identify with, to be able to hear all the voices and perspectives and admit our limitations is very important.

#### **IV. Outreach and Engagement to Cultural Communities**

Sharon Jones said we need to engage with cultural communities and intersectionalities in a manner that does not do further harm. We need to come from a healing perspective, emphasize cultural respect and safety, and learning what certain organizations and institutions represent to different people. We want people to feel healthy and thrive, not to be in fear. We would need a guiding definition to build community and connections. The committee's definition can help guide the way we outreach to and engage our communities.

Nancy Reding said it is very important, when educating people, to have accurate information. Nancy stated that prejudice is the emotional commitment to ignorance and when we are ignorant, the only way we can become un-ignorant, is by educating ourselves in a way that is right.

Patricia Medina asked if the definition can mention how things evolve and reflect the changes in the community.

#### **V. BHRS Training Academy**

Sharon Jones shared that BHRS is in the process of building an academy of trainers. The core foundation and building blocks of this academy will be cultural humility.

#### **VI. Building Blocks**

As trainings are developed, we will also look at Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and implementing ACEs measurement tools. We will also emphasize building a trauma healing organization, which incorporates everything from examining the décor, how offices are set up, how clinicians speak to consumers, and being trauma informed in general.

Steve Roussos shared an experience in which he was reminded how there are often clashes that pit cultural values against each other. In situations such as this, he realized that he was experiencing something he did not understand and that it was not his role to force anyone to recognize the American way as a solution. He expressed a concern that that a definition of cultural competence that claims that complete acceptance and openness will lead to resolutions, but he does not feel that is true.

Sharon Jones said he does not think that is true either. We have to find out what our messages are and what actions are connected to those messages. Sharon said it is important to ask what the culture says about the topic – some cultures are collective and some are individualistic – and have a critical conversation about it. Sharon shared how ethnic services managers throughout the state are processing how to help others as ethnic services managers during this time. She stated that conversations surrounding cultural clashes will be uncomfortable, but the key is to have safe spaces with good ground rules.

Marilyn Mochel mentioned that one of the things is rarely talked about is interpreters and some of the power imbalances that occur within communities. She provided the example of how because there are more Hmong individuals in our community, we often utilized Hmong interpreters to speak with Lao individuals, which may not be the most culturally responsive option. Marilyn stated that if we are aware of the power dynamics within the culture and do not at least address it then we are missing a piece. It is very hard to be culturally competent through an interpreter when we are so unaware of the interpreter's and client's background.

Patricia Medina stated that when using interpreters, we want to make sure that we are checking in with the clients and families to ensure they are okay with who the interpreter is. Sharon Jones stated that every clinical experience is a cultural experience. Patricia Medina stated how it is important to consult when you are unsure of something, to consult and be aware of your limitations so you can provide the best services possible to the individual or family you are serving.

**VII. Program Reports and Updates**

There were not program reports and updates.

**VIII. Possibilities and Success Stories**

Anna Santos from Aspiranet shared that the CEO of Aspiranet released a statement on the current civil unrest and where Aspiranet stands. This is the first time they have taken a stance on a social justice issue. They will be looking at all 40+ locations and looking within to examine how they can be better moving forward.

Sharon Jones shared that the Merced County Board of Supervisors also signed a proclamation in response to the murder of George Floyd.

Fernando Granados is looking for recommendations for online trainings relating to social justice that would benefit case managers and clinicians. Patricia Medina shared that the NASW is currently releasing a lot of trainings relating to social justice. Sharon Jones also shared a possibility of upcoming trainings by Dr. Cone on a related topic. When she learns more she will send the information out to everyone.

**IX. Adjourned**

Meeting adjourned at 10:52 a.m.