

MHSOAC
Mental Health Services
Oversight and Accountability Commission

Report on 2011 MHSA Community Forums

Submitted to the MHSOAC by the Community Forum Workgroup

July 26, 2012

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Background

- The MHSOAC began sponsoring MHSA Community Forums in 2010. In 2011, the Commission established a Community Forum Workgroup (CFW) based on the success of the 2010 Community Forums.
- The CFW is comprised of eight members: four from the Client and Family Leadership Committee (CFLC) and four from the Cultural and Linguistic Competence Committee (CLCC).
- Following the establishment of the CFW, three MHSA Community Forums were held in 2011.
 1. **Placer County** (Roseville) – **April 26, 2011**
 2. **San Francisco County** (San Francisco) – **September 26, 2011**
 3. **Stanislaus County** (Modesto) – **December 8, 2011**
- By the time the Stanislaus Forum was conducted, the CFW finalized goals and developed and established multiple changes to the forum format and structure.

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Goals for MHSA Community Forums:

1. Provide opportunities for the MHSOAC to hear firsthand from clients, family members and other stakeholders about their experience with the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) in local communities throughout California, including what is working and what are the challenges.
2. Expand public awareness and education about the MHSA.
3. Gather and collect information and stories, positive or negative, about the local experience and impact of the MHSA.
4. Expand the visibility of the MHSOAC by holding community forums throughout California, including areas of the state where the Commission does not usually meet.
5. Summarize and analyze the information gathered at Community Forums and report annually to the Commission to shape the development of future policy direction.

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Some Major Changes to the Forum Structure and Format Established in 2011

The most significant changes include:

- A new forum structure allowing forum participants to break into separate discussion groups for various types of participants, i.e., clients and family members, county staff and contract providers, transition age youth (TAY) and persons speaking a foreign language.
- New sets of questions for clients and family members and county staff and contract providers.
- Intensified outreach with significant concentration on populations typically un-served or underserved from various racial/ethnic/cultural communities.
(The Modesto forum was attended by 200 individuals and utilized Spanish, Hmong, Laotian and Cambodian interpreters.)

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Value of MHSA Community Forums to the Commission:

1. A significant amount of information is being gathered from clients, family members and other stakeholders about their MHSA experience.
2. Information both positive and negative is documented from each forum discussion group and from the written questionnaires.
3. The forums conducted in 2011 were in areas of the state where the Commission does not usually meet and restructured to facilitate comments from more individuals.
4. Outreach efforts for the forums have intensified with significant concentration on underserved racial, ethnic and/or cultural communities.
5. The forums are raising the visibility of the Commission and allowing it to be seen in a slightly different light.

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Some Findings from 2011 Community Forums:

The Community Forum Workgroup identified two types of information.

1. Findings consistent among participants across the forums:

- The majority of comments from clients and family members were positive about the impact of the MHSA, the services they receive and the providers of those services.
- **Housing, peer support, peer providers, employment and culturally competent services** were identified by many respondents as the most effective services.
- Need more mental health providers from racial/ethnic communities to provide services.
- There is concern about services or lack of services.
- Comments that clients and family members had more impact when MHSA began – now less involved as community engagement appears to be dwindling.
- TAY expressed: (1) strong interest in the Commission and mental health policymaking; (2) concern about not being represented on the MHSOAC.

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2. Findings prompting additional CFLC attention:

- Forum participants emphasized the need for more Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) for law enforcement in their communities as a result of multiple incidents where a mental health client was mistreated or killed as a result of an inappropriate intervention by law enforcement.
- Forum participants reported terrific success when clients and family members become employed in the mental health system and significant success resulting from peer provider programs.

As a result of these findings the 2012 CFLC charter includes activities focused on:

1. Gathering information about the status of CIT training in individual counties.
2. Developing strategies for promotion of client and family employment in the mental health system.
3. Providing guidance that clarifies and identifies models for consumer-run programs and peer support and specialization.

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Recommendations to the Commission:

1. **The Commission should continue to sponsor MHSOAC community forums around the state with trends and findings analyzed and reported to the Commission annually.**
2. Trends and findings identified in annual reports on the community forums should be considered when developing the Commission's Annual Work Plan.
3. Consistent with the Commission's Annual Work Plan, charter activities identified for various MHSOAC committees should include tasks necessary to further explore and/or support forum findings and intended to improve mental health services in California.
4. Given the number of positive comments about the value of having Commissioners present at the MHSOAC Community Forums, it is recommended that whenever possible Commissioners plan to attend MHSOAC Community Forums held in their communities.

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Proposed Motion:

The Commission adopts the recommendations contained in the 2011 MHSOAC Community Forum Report as follows:

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3. Consistent with the Commission's Annual Work Plan, charter activities identified for various MHSOAC committees should include tasks necessary to further explore and/or support forum findings and intended to improve mental health services in California.
4. Given the number of positive comments about the value of having Commissioners present at the MHSOAC Community Forums, it is recommended that whenever possible Commissioners plan to attend MHSOAC Community Forums held in their communities.

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