

MHSOAC Consumer and Family Leadership Committee Presentation

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“Many of us grew up in cultures where spirituality was very important in our daily lives... and in our mental well being and that of our communities. I know that I did, being from an African American family in Texas, with roots in the rural south. However, many of us had that spiritual awareness “trained out of us.” I know that I did. The whole topic of spirituality often creates a great deal of discomfort in mental health circles. Often clinicians are taught to “pathologize” spirituality in our clients. In fact people who are clinically trained will often “pathologize” that which makes us uncomfortable and that which we don’t understand.”

*-Marye L. Thomas, M.D., Director
Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services*



Alameda County Pool of Consumer Champions takes the stage at the Northern CA MH/Spirituality Conference



Helpful Forms of Spiritual Coping

- ❖ Perceiving God as a partner.
- ❖ Viewing illness in a larger context of meaning.
- ❖ Participating in a supportive religious network.
- ❖ Experiencing spiritual connection to the transcendent.
- ❖ Redefining ultimate values and priorities.

Source: Kenneth Pargament, PhD



California Mental Health & Spirituality Initiative

- Inception -- Fall 2006.
- Funded by voluntary contributions from 51 County Behavioral Health Authorities -- June 2008 to September 2009.
- Supported by a network of liaisons from Statewide Organizations and County Behavioral Health Agencies
- Housed at CiMH- Center for Multicultural Development.



SPIRITUALITY INITIATIVE NETWORK

- California County Behavioral Health Agencies
- California Alliance of Child & Family Services (CACFS)
- California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies (CASRA)
- California Council of Community Mental Health Agencies (CCCMHA)
- California Mental Health Directors' Association (CMHDA)
- California Network of Mental Health Clients
- NAMI California
- Racial & Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition (REMHDCO)
- United Advocates for Children & Families (UACF)
- Over 1,000 individuals on email interest list



GOALS OF THE CALIFORNIA MENTAL HEALTH & SPIRITUALITY INITIATIVE

- To increase awareness of spirituality as a potential resource in mental health prevention, intervention, recovery, and multicultural competency
- To advance the capacity of service providers in California to prevent mental health problems and to support individuals and families in recovery by including spirituality as an aspect of cultural competency and natural community supports
- To encourage collaboration among faith-based organizations, mental health service providers, clients, and families in combating stigma and reducing disparities in access to services for diverse populations
- To provide technical assistance on how to utilize spirituality as a resource for prevention, early intervention, recovery and multicultural competency while preserving client/family choice and respecting the separation of church & state



MAJOR DELIVERABLES

- **Statewide Regional Conferences**
 - Oakland: June 1-2, 2009 – 624 attended
 - Los Angeles: June 4-5, 2009 – 487 attended
- **Three DVD set of conference video footage**
- **Survey of County Directors**
- **Survey of Clients/Families (est. over 1200 received)**
- **Community Dialogues Guide**
- **Statewide Informational Teleconferences**
- **Outreach**
- **Online annotated resource database and website: www.mhspirit.org**



Future Potential Deliverables

- Consultation on incorporating spirituality in Wellness & Recovery Centers
- Training for mental health clinicians on spiritual assessment
- Customized administration and analysis of Client/Family Survey for CBOs, Counties, and communities
- Guidance on collaboration with faith-based organizations to reach unserved and underserved populations
- Community Dialogues with Faith-Based Organizations and community members
- Training teleconferences and webcasts
- Online and classroom curricula
- Clearinghouse for expert consultation and innovative practices among existing programs and agencies statewide
- Consensus Statement



Why Consider Spirituality and Mental Health?

Spirituality can play a positive role in coping with stressful situations

Prayer and reliance on religious role models help avoid drug use and negative activities.

Church attendance and a belief in a higher power provide social and emotional support.

Spirituality enhances the sense of being whole.

Fallot (1997, 1998)

83% of psychiatric patients felt that spiritual beliefs had a positive impact on their illness through the comfort it provided, and the feelings of being cared for and not being alone it engendered.

Lindgren and Courtsey (1995)

Religious practices (such as worship and prayer) appear to protect against severity of psychiatric symptoms and hospitalization, and enhance life satisfaction and speed recovery in mental disorders.

Koenig et al., 2002



Survey of Individuals and Family Members

The purpose of the survey was to document and include the consumer, family member and community voice within the Initiative's goals, values and deliverables.

The survey is available in 8 languages including Spanish, Vietnamese, Hmong, Tagalog, Cantonese, Farsi, and Russian and English.

Surveys administered on paper and online.

Results will be compiled and presented in a statewide report.



More than 90% of the County Behavioral Health Directors surveyed responded “strongly agree” or “agree” to the following statements:

- “Spirituality is an important recovery resource in mental health treatment.” (92%)
- “Spirituality is an important wellness resource in mental health prevention.” (94%)
- “Spirituality is an important element of multicultural competency for mental health providers.” (98%)



SOME OF THE STATED VALUES OF THE MH & SPIRITUALITY INITIATIVE:

Spirituality Is A Core Component Of Cultural Competency

“The public/private mental health system in California recognizes that cultural competency, including the ability to understand different world views, is necessary for effective practice. Spirituality represents a core value within many ethnic and cultural communities and is often considered a primary resource. Faith-based organizations are a vital source of community leadership for individuals, families, and neighborhoods. Therefore, spirituality can be regarded as an essential connector for ethnic and cultural communities and for understanding wellness, illness, intervention, and recovery. We are committed to the inclusion of multicultural voices that represent California’s broad array of faith traditions and practices.”



ANOTHER CORE VALUE: THE PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE OF CLIENT CHOICE

“We are passionate about choice...”

including individuals’ and families’ choice *not* to engage with spirituality and/or religion.

Mental health services are enriched by an open, welcoming, and non-judgmental stance toward spiritual, religious, and cultural beliefs, practices, rituals, values, theologies, and philosophies - including non-belief or non-practice – that may be different from one’s own.

We welcome the opportunity to be enriched by the wisdom that others have gleaned from their own spiritual path and/or life experience.”



Next Steps

- Request endorsement by the CFLC
- Opportunity to present to other MHSOAC Committees and full OAC
- Support in securing ongoing funding:
 - Statewide Initiatives (e.g., Stigma/Discrimination)
 - WET Regional Partnerships
 - DMH
 - Other



**“Anything that supports hope, wellness,
and recovery is something that a public
mental health system ought to do.”**

**--- Dr. Marv Southard, DSW, Director, Los Angeles
County Department of Mental Health**



