

Draft Report to the MHSOAC on 2010 Community Forums
Submitted by the Client and Family Leadership Committee

Analysis of Community Forums

The 2011 Client and Family Leadership Committee Charter (CFLC) activities require that the CFLC provide a report on the findings of the 2010 Community Forum activities. The following are the findings and observations from the Community Forums. The five CFLC-sponsored 2010 MHSOAC Community Forums varied from a dozen attendees up to a high of over 80 participants. The key to having good attendance was having adequate time for outreach. In 2010, we had significant differences in lead time to conduct outreach for the Community Forums. During 2011 the MHSOAC should have improved attendance due to longer outreach windows. More MHSOAC staff have been assigned to work on the Community Forums and this should also improve the success of the forums. In addition, a Community Forum Workgroup, drawing from the CFLC and CLCC, has been formed to assist with planning and outreach for the forums. Overall, 2011 should see the Community Forums become a more effective tool for the MHSOAC to educate the public about the MHSOAC and to receive feedback from the public on the progress of the MHSOAC. This public feedback will provide the MHSOAC with input for policymaking from the perspective of clients and families, including members of unserved, underserved and inappropriately served communities. There were many valuable lessons learned at the 2010 Community Forums. The forums provided the MHSOAC with data and experience that will assist with the quality improvement process of the forum structure. It will be the task of the Community Forum Workgroup to use the lessons learned to refine the goals of the Community Forums and focus on policy recommendations from the outcomes of the 2011 Community Forums.

Findings and Responses of the CFLC

The CFLC has made the following findings and has had the following responses for its 2010 Community Forums:

Finding 1: Presentations by local community programs provided background, context and discussion topics for the Community Forum open dialogue that followed.

Response 1: The CFLC decided to format the day of the forum with community program presentations followed later in the day by Community Forum dialogue.

Finding 2: Due to low attendance at one of the early Community Forums, the CFLC increased community outreach efforts; this had a direct impact on the attendance of the future community forums.

Response 2: The CFLC has determined that outreach efforts will be expanded prior to the Community Forums in order to ensure all stakeholders in the area are aware of the event.

Finding 3: The comments from the Humboldt community were generally positive about Humboldt County MHSA planning and programs and the MHSA's impact on individuals and the community. However, at subsequent CFLC meetings, some committee members wondered if the presence of the Humboldt County mental health staff discouraged individuals from speaking freely regarding their experiences with the MHSA.

Response 3: The CFLC decided to conduct community program presentations followed later in the day by Community Forum dialogue. The CFLC believed that some separation between community presentations and forum dialogue would allow for more open dialogue.

Finding 4: Multiple speakers provided comments at the Monterey Community Forum. Some speakers were from Monterey County and several had traveled from other counties in order to participate in the forum. One speaker commented on an increased awareness of the word "recovery". Another speaker commented on the increase in the county mental health staff getting out into the community.

Response 4: Awareness of the MHSA continues to grow. One of the goals of conducting Community Forums is to increase the awareness of the MHSA.

Finding 5: Several speakers at the Monterey County Community Forum had some of their concerns addressed by members of the Monterey Mental Health Commission who attended the forum. For some of the speakers not from Monterey County, the issue arose of who would address their concerns. Some members of the CFLC offered to refer attendees for individual issue resolution.

Response 5: Monterey County officials took contact information from individuals with complaints and promised to respond. The CFLC has determined that it will provide printed resource information at the Community Forums and invite members of County Mental Health Commissions and Boards to provide a resource during forums.

Finding 6: Public comments at the Long Beach Community Forum ranged widely. Some individuals spoke about the MHSA, but most spoke about their particular experience with the mental health system.

Response 6: The CFLC has determined that the Community Forums are a useful venue for citizens to tell their stories and express their feelings regarding their experience with the mental health system.

Finding 7: At several Community Forums, people made comments about their lack of knowledge about the MHSA. This phenomenon led Chair Vega to subsequently make the comment that the Community Forums are an opportunity to educate the public about the programs of the MHSA.

Response 7: The CFLC has determined that the Community Forums provide a great opportunity to disseminate information and educate the public about the MHSA and will make a concerted effort to increase participation at the Community Forums.

Finding 8: The comments about the MHSA and MHSA programs were divided in Long Beach between positive and critical comments. A parent of two boys with psychiatric illness commented that MHSA plans are not inclusive. Another comment was made that input from parents of schoolchildren is lacking in MHSA planning. Lastly, a comment was made that transformation has not worked for the working poor.

Response 8: The CFLC has determined that it will provide printed resource information at the Community Forums and invite members of County Mental Health Commissions and Boards to provide resources during forums. The printed resource list will provide a resource for individuals discouraged with the process. The ultimate goal is to ensure stakeholders are included in the process at the local level.

Finding 9: The Community Forums for 2010 provided a valuable learning experience with a large portion of the time devoted to the creating the structure of the forums. Although there was much learned from the experience, the lessons from the forums did not result in policy recommendations.

Response 9: It will be the task of the Community Forum Workgroup to use the lessons learned from the Community Forums to refine the goals of the Community Forums and focus on policy recommendations from the outcomes of the 2011 Community Forums.

Background

In 2010, five Community Forums were held by the MHSOAC's Client and Family Leadership Committee (CFLC) throughout the state of California, primarily to elicit comments from the public on the progress and implementation of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) in local communities. The five locations for the Community Forums were: Tulare County (Visalia), Los Angeles County (City of Los Angeles), Humboldt County (Eureka), Monterey County (Salinas) and Los Angeles County (Long Beach).

The structure of the Community Forums evolved during the course of the year. In Tulare County, the forum began with presentations by Tulare County staff

regarding their MHSA funded programs. By the end of the 2010 Community Forums, in Long Beach, the Community Forums had presentations from various MHSA funded programs, followed by a semi-structured discussion with formal and informal questions from the CFLC to the community participants.¹ Few notes were captured in the first two Community Forums; however, by the end of 2010, the CFLC produced summaries of the forums.² The following report is a summary and progression of the various Community Forums held by the CFLC in 2010. At the end of the report, we present findings and CFLC responses.

Tulare County (Visalia), February 18, 2010

The first Community Forum was held in Tulare County. Presentations were provided by Tulare County mental health staff and others regarding their MHSA funded programs. Presentations included programs on: a Mental Health Court, a Wellness/Recovery/Family Support program, a Transitional Living Center's consumer activities and events, a Family Advocacy program, and a Community Living Center. Additional presentations were provided by individuals with lived experience and family members of persons living at the Transitional Living Center and Community Living Center. After presentations, the CFLC membership was given a guided tour of the Transitional Center Housing and the CFLC members spoke with some of the residents. The structure of this forum was informal and just being developed.

Los Angeles County (City of Los Angeles), April 14, 2010

The Los Angeles Community Forum was another forum where the structure and purpose of the event was still in its infancy. A half-dozen guests attended the forum, including Kathleen Derby from NAMI California and Sharon Kuehn and Delphine Brody from the California Network of Mental Health Clients. Carey Temple, a consumer advocate, made a presentation along with Ruth Hollman, representing a consumer center. Elyssa Soloman of the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health also spoke. Several other community members participated in the dialogue for this forum. As stated earlier, few notes were captured for this forum.

Humboldt County (Eureka), July 8, 2010

The Eureka Community Forum was the first forum where the CFLC employed concerted community outreach to get invitations and flyers out to the community to encourage attendance at the forum. The CFLC made contact with the county mental health staff and many community organizations who had participated in past MHSA planning efforts for the Community Services and Supports component and the Prevention and Early Intervention component in the county. In addition, the MHSOAC Communications Unit produced artistic flyers and

¹ See attached Community Forum question list.

² See attached example of Community Forum Summary from Salinas, September 22, 2010

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public letters of invitation to the Community Forums and these were distributed to the community in advance of the forum. As a result of this outreach, over 80 members of the Humboldt County community attended the Eureka Community Forum.

At the Eureka Community Forum, the format for the remainder of the 2010 Community Forums began to gel. The beginning of the forum was comprised of community presentations followed by community discussion of CFLC questions related to the progress of the MHSA in the local community. In Eureka, the director of the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services, Philip Crandall, gave a welcome to Humboldt County and to their MHSA programs. Crandall was followed by the County Mental Health Director, Karolyn Stein, who described the demographics of the county and some of the mental health programs.

The additional presenters included:

- Rochelle Trochtenberg, representing the Humboldt County Transition Age Youth Collaboration. Trochtenberg spoke on the needs of Transition Age Youth in Humboldt County.
- Susan Hoffman, staff facilitator, discussed some of the programs of the Hope Wellness Center.
- Client advocate Rob Chittenden talked about client advocacy.
- Jerome Simone of the United Indian Health Center (UIHC) spoke on some of the UIHC programs that do not receive MHSA funding.
- Thom Dewey, Chief of Police at Humboldt State University (HSU) discussed HSU's need for increased resources to address its mental health challenges. Dewey also spoke about the use of crisis intervention training for police officers.

CFLC Chair, Commissioner Eduardo Vega, described his mental health employment background and other CFLC members described their connection to mental health. Commissioner Vega asked for community feedback on CFLC-produced forum questions. The community feedback included a discussion of MHSA values. Many community members spoke and described their own connection to mental health and how the MHSA had impacted their lives.

The comments from the Humboldt community were generally positive about Humboldt County MHSA planning and programs and the MHSA's impact on individuals and the community. However, at subsequent CFLC regular business meetings, some committee members wondered if the presence of the Humboldt County mental health staff at the Eureka forum encouraged individuals to focus on positive comments about county programs. Chair Vega addressed this issue at the following Salinas forum.

Monterey County (Salinas), September 22, 2010

At the Salinas Community Forum, the structure of the forum progressed such that the CFLC received community program presentations around 1:00 pm and the Community Forum itself began at 4:00 pm. Chair Vega's intent was to have some separation between the community program presentations and the forum so that forum attendees would feel more secure in making their comments in public. The community program presenters during the regular business meeting in Salinas were:

- Juan Uranga, Executive Director, Center for Community Advocacy who spoke about his peer to peer program.
- John Bechtel, Staff Member of the Omni Center, who described his experience as a client and his work at the Omni Center.
- Barbara Mitchell, Executive Director of Interim, Inc. who discussed the Sunflower Gardens Housing Project.
- Dana Edgull, staff to the Avanza TAY Project, who introduced a Transition Aged Youth named Violet who spoke about her mentoring experience with Avanza.
- Mel Mason, executive director, the Village Project, who talked about his experience as the primary therapist to this project that serves primarily the African American community.

All of these community programs receive MHSA funds.

As previously stated, the Community Forum began after the regular business of the CFLC. It is noteworthy that this was the first community forum where the MHSAOAC provided interpreter services to the attendees—Spanish in this case. Speakers were not identified in the summary notes produced by staff in order to provide some anonymity, if the speakers chose to omit stating their names. The CFLC asked previously developed questions of the community forum audience.³ In order to read the summary of the forum dialogue, please see the attached Community Forum Summary from Salinas.⁴

Some of the comments from the Salinas forum are noteworthy. Some speakers were from Monterey County and several had traveled from other counties in order to participate in the forum. Participants from Monterey County included one speaker who commented on an increased awareness of the word "recovery" and another speaker who commented on the increase in the county mental health staff getting out into the community. Several speakers, who were critical of county services, had their concerns addressed by members of the Monterey Mental Health Commission who attended the forum. For some of the speakers not from Monterey County, the issue arose of who would address their concerns. Some members of the CFLC offered to refer attendees for individual issue resolution.

³ See attachment 1.

⁴ See attachment 2.

Los Angeles County (Long Beach), October 27, 2010

At the Long Beach Community Forum, the CFLC followed the structure of the meeting at Salinas where the community made program presentations at the regular business meeting of the CFLC, which were followed later in the afternoon by a separate Community Forum. The following presenters made community program presentations at Long Beach:

- Gita Cugley and Allison Foster spoke representing the Children's MHSA Program of Los Angeles.
- Joe Ruiz spoke representing The Village, training director of Mental Health America, Los Angeles.
- John Lewis and John Czernak spoke representing the Long Beach Wellness Center.
- Dr. Terry Gock spoke representing the Asian Pacific Family Center.
- Keris Myrick, President and CEO of Project Return, a peer support network spoke.

The comments at the Long Beach forum ranged widely and were divided between positive and critical comments. Some individuals spoke about the MHSA, but most spoke about their particular experience with the mental health system. A parent of two boys with psychiatric illness commented that MHSA plans are not inclusive. Another comment was made that input from parents of schoolchildren is lacking in MHSA planning. Lastly, a comment was made that transformation has not worked for the working poor. Some people spoke about their lack of knowledge about the MHSA and this phenomenon led Chair Vega to subsequently make the comment that the Community Forums are an opportunity to educate the public about the programs of the MHSA.