

Overview of African-American Spirituality Initiative

Gigi R. Crowder, L.E., ACBHCS and MHFC

Rev. Dr. Oscar Wright, UACF

&

Cassandra Jennings, Office of Mayor Kevin
Johnson, Sacramento

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+ Faith and Mental Wellness – Partnering for Success

“Faith is rooted in the traditions, beliefs and values of most cultures. It shapes world views and provides an important way for people in the community to come together and receive information. When experiencing mental illness, people often return to their faith-based roots for support to understand their illness. Faith-based initiatives offer great opportunities for organizations to partner with institutions of faith to share information with parishioners on recovery and resiliency for overall wellness.”

Ohio Department of Mental Health

+ Hill & Company Project Team

- **JIM HILL**– President, Hill & Company Communications; more than 30 years marketing communications and social marketing experience; former Vice President-Communications Kaiser Permanente, CEO of Burrell Public Relations,.
- **NINA GREENWOOD** – Project Lead, Hill & Company Communications; marketing communications, direct marketing and product management experience in for-profit and not-for-profit organizations; former Director of Marketing at Brighter Beginnings and Children’s Hospital & Research Center, Oakland.
- **LINDA GOLDSMITH, MPH** – Program Manager, Hill & Company Communications; extensive experience in marketing communications, strategic planning and social marketing with an emphasis on health and wellness; former Director of Planning, California Pacific Medical Center, San Francisco, and Director of Marketing, Telecare Corporation, Alameda.

Historical African American MHFC Church In Alameda
+ Co. wearing the Green Ribbons on “Each Mind Matters
Day of Worship”, Sunday, May 17, 2014
Allen Temple Baptist Church, Oakland CA



✦ Dr. Rev. J. Alfred Smith Jr. and Junior Usher passing out
Mental Health Awareness green ribbons
Over 700 in attendance!



+ MHFC Founders and Training Team

- **GIGI R. CROWDER, L.E.** – Ethnic Services Manager, Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services and facilitator of Alameda County’s *African American Utilization Report*. Creator of Ethnically and Culturally Specific Faith Strategies.
- **PASTOR HORACIO S. JONES** – Senior Pastor, Family Bible Fellowship, Newark, CA and President/CEO Tri Cities Community Development Center. Co- Creator of concept for “Mental Health-Friendly Congregations.”
- **MINISTER MONIQUE TARVER** – Mental Health and Spirituality Trainer/Wellness Educator and current Co-Chair of the CA Statewide Mental Health and Spirituality Initiative.

+ Understanding the Issues

- To better understand the cultural nuances of stigma and discrimination in the African-American community, and to identify culturally responsive community defined best practices, I used the ACBHCS African American Utilization study and worked with the following key stakeholders
 - Individuals with lived experience with mental health concerns and their families and loved ones
 - Faith leaders/Pastors
 - Mental health professionals
 - African American Subject Matter Experts
 - Community Based Organizations
 - Partners from other systems of care; education, foster care, probation
- Performed literature reviews of key studies and research materials
- Brainstormed strategic culturally responsive approaches to address this social justice issue

+ Key Findings

- Rather than relying on the mental health system to address their needs, many African Americans draw support from faith, family and communities.
- **88%** of African-American consumers and family members agree or strongly agree that “spirituality is important to me/my family member’s mental health.” – *CA Mental Health & Spirituality Initiative Consumer and Family Survey, 2010*
- We heard repeatedly that “harnessing the power of the faith community” for delivering messages of support, education and hope is the most effective way to address stigma and discrimination for African Americans.

+ Initiative Objective

- To reduce mental health stigma, discrimination and ethnic disparities related to mental health challenges among African Americans using an inclusive faith-based initiative; ***“Mental Health-Friendly Communities”***. identifies local resources and employs cost effective strategies for sustainability.
- To become a “Mental-Health Friendly Community,” participating Faith Centers/Churches, starting with the Senior Pastor, must complete customized culturally relevant training modules and establish fully committed mental health ministry teams that include those with lived experience to oversee program implementation and ongoing best practices.
- County Mental Health Departments must also make commitments and actively participate in targeted trainings and partner with churches and faith-based organizations to support community wellness for African Americans.

Training	Audience	Description
Mental Health 101	Pastors/ Ministers/Clergy and other Leaders in the Church	Broadens the competency of African American spiritual/faith leaders as first responders to mental health crises, and inspires leaders to create welcoming communities for individuals and families living with mental health challenges. Corrects misinformation and educates faith leaders to recognize signs and symptoms and provide better support for those with mental health concerns. Includes a pre and post test to gauge progress.
Spirituality 101	Mental Health Providers	Builds understanding among mental health and allied health professionals of the important role of faith in mental health care for African-American consumers and families. Focuses on how to include spirituality as a resource for wellness, recovery and multicultural competency. Also facilitates development of a provider network to partner with the faith community in addressing specific needs of African Americans. Includes a pre and post test.
Keepers of the Flock	Pastors/clergy, mental health service providers consumers, family members, community stakeholders	Heightening awareness, overview training that incorporates appropriate elements of all trainings to provide a rationale for the need to support and respect the individual choice to include faith/spirituality in wellness and recovery planning. This training serves to provide context for any community caregiver committed to effectively supporting the wellness recovery journey of those living with mental health issues.
A Bridge Over Troubled Waters	CBOs/ Providers/ Churches	Provides a historical perspective of the role that faith fulfills within the African-American experience. This training provides perspective as to why the roots of faith run so deep within the African American Community and has been identified as a source of healing; instrumental in maintaining personal and community mental wellness.

+ Pilot Communities

- Four communities were selected to pilot the Spirituality Initiative, including: after it initially rolled out in Alameda County
 - Solano
 - Sacramento
 - Fresno
 - San Bernardino
- Many of these communities contain some of the largest populations for African Americans in the state, cover a broad geographical area and have faith and community leaders willing to develop strategic alliances for a sustainable stigma reduction initiative.



Other collaborative work being done to advance this Initiative **United Advocates for Children and Families**, UACF and San Bernardino County, Inland Empire Concerned African American Clergy, IECAAC

Rev. Dr. Oscar Wright - Faith Share 360



+ Ten Commitments to Be A MHFC Congregation/Church

HANDOUTS



Support from Key Elected Officials

Chief of Staff for City of Sacramento Mayor, Cassandra Jennings at the MHFC Kickoff Event in Sacramento





Next Steps

- Questions and Discussion

Thank you!