

MHSOAC Staff Overview

Of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Report

“An investigative report on the perceived mismanagement and inequitable distribution of Behavioral Health services and resources to the Latino/a community”

“Re: Ventura County Behavioral Health-A Publically Funded Agency”

Background:

Commission staff have read the November 1, 2014 report submitted to the Commission by the California League of United Latin American Citizens (California LULAC). As identified by LULAC this is “An investigative report on the perceived mismanagement and inequitable distribution of Behavioral Health services and resources to the Latino/a community” by Ventura County Behavioral Health. This report was delivered to Commission staff at the Commission’s mental health forum held in Ventura County on November 6, 2014.

Caveat: What follows are highlights of the findings and observations described in the LULAC report.

To be clear, based solely on reading the LULAC report, there is no way to determine or analyze whether various findings and observations in the report about service and fiscal disparities to the Latino/a community in Ventura County are accurate. As such, what follows is a summary of the observations and findings as described in the LULAC report.

General Complaints Addressed in LULAC Report:

The LULAC report indicates that their investigation was prompted by numerous complaints from local community members, community leaders, several elected officials, and concerned staff from within the Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH) department. The report states that the majority of complaints came from the sectors of the county with the largest concentration of people of Mexican descent.

As reported the complaints included:

1. That the Ventura County Behavioral Health management and leadership team maintain a veiled policy of doing as little as necessary to meet the mental health services needs of the Latino community, as compared to the same needs of the White community
2. That the VCBH management and leadership team maintain a covert practice of hiding and altering data and evaluation reports that reveal the failed performance of the agency in reaching and meeting the mental health needs of the Latino community

3. That clinical staff assigned to work in Latino communities are treated disparately as compared to staff assigned to work in White, more affluent communities
4. That repeated recommendations from official evaluation agencies to improve services for the Latino community are ignored by the VCBH management and leadership team
5. That VCBH staff, including managers, who attempt to address recommendations made by external audit and evaluation teams are either ignored or directed to “hold back” on the intended action

LULAC’s report begins with describing the procedures used to complete their investigation and definitions of specific terms used throughout the report

Summary of Findings/Observations Contained in LULAC Report:

1. Penetration Rate for Latino/as is less than the state average penetration rate for Anglos. This inequity makes it unsatisfactory. (Penetration rate measures the effectiveness of a County to reach and serve members of a population that are eligible for Medi-cal sponsored mental health services)
2. There is a failure to meet language proficiency needs of Spanish-speaking clients
3. There is a history of recommendations contained in APS Healthcare California External Quality Review Organization (EQRO) reports and documents from the Latino Access Project that indicate a need to improve and increase services to the Latino/a community
4. Appearance that VCBH senior management discounted APS Healthcare EQRO reports and their recommendations
5. Practice of dismissing and/or hiding poor performance findings from stakeholders
6. Disparate treatment of persons with serious mental illness from the Latino/Mexican community who are not provided the same quality and quantity of services being provided to the White population by VCBH
7. Disparate allocation of funding resources to program operators that are representative in appearance and cultural characteristics of the Mexican community. Perception that programs owned and operated by White personnel are greatly favored with funding
8. Disparate treatment of VCBH employees serving the Latino/a community in terms of staff ratio to client population
9. Insensitivity to travel and access to service issues by restricting clients from gaining services from the nearest clinic and instead requiring them to travel to a clinic that is further away

10. Appearance that cultural *incompetence* starts at the top of VCBH

11. Directing Child Welfare Subsystem staff to withhold information from federal compliance officer with regard to the “Katie A” decision that mandated a provision to “accomplish systemic change for mental health services to children and youth” at imminent risk of being placed in foster homes

12. Lack of understanding or appreciation for the value and use of effective outreach to reach and serve under-served populations making outreach to the community non-existent

The report concludes with nine recommended actions to address the LULAC findings. (See Pages 30 – 34 of the report)

As stated previously, based solely on reading the LULAC report, there is no way to determine or analyze whether various findings and observations in the report about service and fiscal disparities to the Latino/a community in Ventura County are accurate.

Additional Note: Commission staff have been recently informed by LULAC that they have begun to work with staff from Ventura County Behavioral Health to address the Latino/a penetration rate as well as other issues raised in their report.

