
AGENDA ITEM 8

Information

January 28, 2016 Commission Meeting

Update on Crisis Services Project

Summary: In August of 2015, the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (OAC or Commission) under the leadership of Commissioner Boyd launched a project to gain an increased understanding of the current state of crisis services for children and youth throughout California and develop recommendations to more effectively meet the needs of children, youth, family members and the communities in which they live.

Recognizing the breadth and depth of knowledge and expertise held by consumers, providers, governmental organizations and advocates; the OAC engaged a diverse group of stakeholders and subject matter experts through an advisory workgroup to inform and guide the project. The workgroup was charged with defining crisis services; exploring the role of these services within a continuum of care that is prevention focused and recovery oriented; identifying challenges, barriers, opportunities and best practices; and developing recommendations to improve access, service coordination and outcomes. All workgroup meetings were open to the public and strived to incorporate a range of perspectives and experiences to support the development of shared knowledge and ensure that eventual recommendations address the needs and interests of diverse communities throughout California.

In September and October of 2015, Commissioners were invited to participate in a series of site visits in San Francisco, Ventura and Santa Barbara counties to see first-hand a number of crisis service delivery systems and speak with frontline providers. Commissioners also had the opportunity to hear from consumers, stakeholders and subject matter experts during the regularly scheduled public meetings and engage in an informed dialog regarding challenges and opportunities of meeting the needs of children and families when faced with a mental health crisis.

One theme that consistently emerged throughout this project was the importance of implementing a comprehensive continuum of crisis services that focuses specifically on meeting the needs of children, youth, teens and families at each potential phase of a mental health crisis. To effectively support children and their families/caregivers while also reducing the likelihood of trauma, crisis services must have the ability to increase and decrease the intensity of interventions, across a range of home, community and residential services in response to the needs of the child and their unique context. Central to this continuum of services is the ability to respond rapidly, 24 hours per day and seven days per week, to community settings and remain with the child and family until the crisis is resolved or a determination is made that a higher level of intervention is required. While not all mental health crises can be addressed in a community setting, it is critical to have a range of available interventions with emergency department and/or acute psychiatric hospitalization representing the last alternative after all other efforts and resources along the continuum have been exhausted or determined inappropriate for resolving the crisis.

Although several communities throughout California have made significant progress in developing specific program components and services designed to respond to children experiencing a mental health crisis, no counties were identified during this project that have successfully built out the full continuum of services required to effectively serve this population. It is anticipated that recommendations at the conclusion of this project will be designed to support the continued “build out” of a viable comprehensive continuum of crisis services and make it available within every community.

Enclosures: None

Handout: None

Recommended Action: Information item only.