

# MHSA Newsletter

Stanislaus County Behavioral Health & Recovery Services  
*A Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Service Organization*

...a newsletter to share information about Stanislaus County's Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) programs with staff, consumers, stakeholders, other county departments and the community at large.



## UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

By Jim Hurley, Manager, Workforce Education and Training

"Whatever you do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius and power and magic in it."  
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

*The medieval policy of setting up large hunting reserves for rich nobility resulted in the preservation of large green spaces, often used later as parks or natural habitats, throughout England and other places in Europe. This was an unintended consequence. Similarly, what began as an individual accepting an invitation to go to a college class at MJC, has often resulted in something unexpected and transformational.*

Workforce Education and Training (WE&T) offers an array of financial incentives including stipends to support our existing and potential workforce.

The California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agency curriculum known as CASRA is entering its fourth semester at Modesto Junior College. CASRA is considered the "Gold Standard" of social rehabilitation principles being taught in the classroom. It is designed to provide theoretical and practical knowledge and skills for entry level staff working with adults experiencing mental illness. Since WE&T began, we have given out sixty stipends for CASRA and/or Human Services.

BHRS and contractor agencies have generously opened their doors for volunteers and/or field placement students for job shadowing. CASRA students are made up largely of persons with lived experience as consumers or family members, and are from diverse cultural backgrounds.

But this doesn't tell the story. Ultimately, this is about opportunity for our staff and potential staff from the community. It's about BHRS investing in people.

On September 9, 2010, I met with four CASRA students; three African American and one Latina student who shared how CASRA has impacted their lives. All have lived experience as consumers and/or family members. Here's excerpts of what they said.

**"What's common in African American families is 'what goes on in this house stays in this house' and you can quote me directly on that! You know, when it comes to mental health issues, it doesn't have to be that way."**

**"When I first heard my brother had Bipolar Disorder, I judged him. I judged him harshly, and I was angry with him. Now, I have a different understanding. When I see him, I think how can I help my brother?"**

**"There's so much stigma in our community about mental illness. If you have mental health problems there's shame. You are looked at differently. Some people think the person with mental illness may use it as an excuse to justify doing what they want to do. That's not it! We can approach people with empathy, not pity, with understanding, not judgments."**

**"My mom had depression for years. She would go to codependency meetings because my dad went to AA meetings, but it was never really for her. Like in many Latino families, there is a stigma having depression. It was a weakness. I truly understand that depression is a treatable condition, not a failure for a person."**

**"We all have issues. What CASRA does is educate you that mental illness is not a failure; it's a treatable medical problem. It allowed me to examine myself. How I conduct myself as a consumer and how I accept others. I've been taught life skills and personal responsibility,"**


If you're a staff person, consumer, or family member and want more information about CASRA, contact me at 920-525-5324, [jhurley@stanbhrs.org](mailto:jhurley@stanbhrs.org). The fall semester has already begun, but there's always spring.

### MHSA Five Essential Elements:

- Community Collaboration
- Cultural Competence
- Client/Family-Driven Mental Health Systems
- Wellness for Recovery & Resilience
- Integrated Service Experiences

### Inside this issue:

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 Any questions or suggestions regarding MHSA, please forward them by I.D. mail or e-mail to Karen Hurley, BHRS / Administration, e-mail: [khurley@stanbhrs.org](mailto:khurley@stanbhrs.org) or Pete Duenas, BHRS / Administration, e-mail: [pduenas@stanbhrs.org](mailto:pduenas@stanbhrs.org)

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## EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT COMMUNITY CAPACITY-BUILDING PROJECT

By Ruben Imperial, Prevention Early Intervention Manager & Karen Hurley, MFT, Planning Coordinator

### What is the Community Capacity-Building Project?

The Community Capacity-Building Project is part of Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) approved Prevention and Early Intervention Plan, a plan developed with representative stakeholders across Stanislaus County and funded through the Mental Health Services Act. Under the Community Capacity-Building Project, local communities will be supported to develop and implement community-driven plans to improve and sustain the behavioral and emotional well-being of their members. In this context, *community* is defined as a group of individuals who have sufficiently strong relationships that they are able to provide tangible support to each other and act together.

### How will communities be chosen to participate?

BHRS staff and consultants will engage in discussions with community leaders across the county, focusing particularly on unserved and under-served communities, to assess their readiness and interest to engage in the Community Capacity-Building Project. Some considerations about readiness will include:

- The engagement of leaders who have substantial constituencies in the community;
- The ability of participating community members and leaders to engage other community members, and to reflect their interests and commitments;
- The willingness and ability of participants to regularly assess the mental and emotional well-being of their community members, and to embrace accountability for improving community-defined measures of well-being over time;
- The willingness and ability of community leaders and members to commit the time to the process; and
- A relationship with a 501(c)(3) organization who can enter into contracts with BHRS if community grants are sought—see below.

Ultimately BHRS staff and consultants, in dialogue with community leaders, will select a cohort of communities to participate in the first year. Additional communities will be added in subsequent years.

### What will be expected of communities who are chosen to participate?

Communities who are chosen will participate in a planning, action, and learning process, facilitated by consultants working with BHRS and/or staff members, to develop:

- Broad agreement about conditions of behavioral and emotional well-being that community members want to achieve (community results);
- Broad agreement about the measures the community will track to assess progress toward these results (community indicators);
- A plan for what community members will do to promote these conditions of well-being, including leveraging existing community resources, pursuing new community-based strategies, and other efforts.

As communities begin to implement their plans, they will be expected to regularly assess and report on the emotional well-being of their members, and to participate in on-going

learning processes with other communities to improve their efforts over time.

### What are examples of actions communities might take through their plans?

Communities may take action to promote the mental and emotional well-being of their members by organizing some or all of the following:

- Community wellness fairs;
- Cultural events to promote deeper understanding and connection to culture, language, and healing traditions;
- Community mentoring efforts to provide support to young people experiencing emotional or mental distress;
- Peer support circles for veterans returning from Afghanistan or Iraq;
- Volunteers to be trained as Mental Health First Aid Trainers and Mental Health First Aiders; and
- Other community-driven activities to promote the mental and emotional well-being of their members.

### What support will be offered to communities who are chosen to participate?

Community leaders and participants will receive several forms of support for their efforts. First, communities will receive facilitation and leadership development support to enable members to master the skills and frameworks needed to sustain their work over time. They can also receive support to help resolve conflicts or other challenges that may be impeding their ability to participate in the process.

Second, once communities have developed their plans, they may apply for small amounts of funding to support their actions. Although the details for these community grants are still being developed, communities can expect to be able to access at least \$30,000 a year for 2-3 years. Third, communities will receive support from a community data specialist hired by BHRS to generate and analyze reliable and timely data to assess the effectiveness of their efforts. Finally, communities will participate in various learning processes with other communities to share and receive lessons learned in order to improve their efforts.

### What are some of the results that communities can expect from their active engagement in this program?

In the short-term, communities can expect to generate:

- Greater awareness among participants about mental health issues particular to their community;
- Greater commitment to effect conditions of mental and emotional well-being for members of their communities; and
- Improved skill sets to effect change, and promote mental and emotional well-being, in their communities.

Over time, as communities begin implementing their wellness efforts, they should expect to generate and document progress on a range of indicators they have defined to assess the mental and emotional well-being of their members.

**Who can I contact for more information?** Ruben Imperial or Jennifer Marsh at 209.541.2555, [rimperial@stanbhers.org](mailto:rimperial@stanbhers.org), [jmarsh@stanbhers.org](mailto:jmarsh@stanbhers.org).