

Identifying Critical Mental Health & Substance Abuse Needs!

The December meetings for the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services strategic planning efforts were focused on Innovative Projects, one of the service components of the Mental Health Services Act. These projects are time limited, and the current Innovative Project is slated to end in June, 2015. We reviewed the proposed ideas, and heard feedback and additional ideas from the community. See our website (<http://www.santacruzhealth.org/cmhs/2cmhs.htm>) for additional information about previous meetings, and for input from the community at the December meetings.

There was broad support for developing a peer and family advocate/navigator service. In addition to the ideas presented, the community had the following ideas that may be considered as part of our Innovative Program, or as a separate program to be developed. The ideas were:

- Educational program that connects all of us, and is more personal. It is open, not “anti”. Consider language that does not reinforce prejudice against persons with mental illness.
- More coordination is needed, including various services, like housing.
- Training is needed for navigators.
- Use of technology to enhance these services. This may include webinars as a way of introducing services to a broad base of people.
- Consider an “engagement pyramid”. For some issues, we may need a wide net of people involved, but for others a smaller work group is needed.
- Have mental wellness leadership councils at high schools to help change the perception of people. Changing perceptions is best achieved when reaching youth.
- “Open Dialogue” model from Finland.
- Need to approach to locked care (hospital) services. How can we engage in other ways?
- Communication is essential.
- Faith based community is very interested in being engaged and involved, and are already providing services.
- Families don’t know what to do, so family navigation is so important.
- Alternative mental health treatments, like “emotional freedom” used originally with Vets. Have community wide lectures on alternative treatments.
- Have various navigators, not just one.
- Peer services should be peer run.
- Consider adding legal services as part of the navigation.

Upcoming meetings:

Please join us at the **Innovation Program Work Group!** We will meet on **Thursday, January 8, 2015**, at 9:00 a.m. at the Simpkins Swim Center, 979 17th Avenue, Santa Cruz.

How to prepare for the meeting:

The Innovative Program Work Group will focus on developing our idea of adding peer and family supports to our services. Please consider the following:

- What will make our program “innovative”?
- What is the question we want to answer? (See our proposal of ideas to get an idea of questions.)
- Imagine this program is up and running. How would we know it is successful?

