

Sonoma County Mental Health Board **Annual Report**

As I review the annual report from 2018-2019, I am struck by the sense that we had all survived disasters (three of them; fire, flood, and an economic shortfall that resulted in reduced staffing and a total revision of the County Mental Health system). I believe the response to those disasters made us stronger as a county. Little did we know that there was more yet to come.

This past year, the mental health system has needed to respond to disasters that we had not imagined.

As the fire service, law enforcement, and PG&E worked to strengthen our response to fire emergencies, we again experienced fire, this time very close to where the Tubbs fire had been, but in unburned fuel. The county, already having experienced the destruction possible when out of control fire and weather patterns combined, reacted quickly to implement new strategies. Fire and emergency services ordered evacuations of most of the county. PG&E turned off power to many areas. County mental health staff manned emergency shelters. The peer run centers, so recently saved from closing by county funds served as daytime respites for many of those displaced. Many people were out of their homes and without power. The exercise served to show where improvements could be made on the newly formed plan.

Thankfully, the river did not flood. If anything, we did not have enough rain, and this summer may test the fire service once again.

The county declared another disaster, this one more manmade than natural. In fall, homeless began gathering to set up camp on the Joe Rodota Trail near Stonypoint Road. The encampment was on County property. The presence of such a concentration of homeless changed the nature of that section of the trail. Some of those who lived nearby, as well as those who wanted to use the trail recreationally, were impacted. There was nowhere to offer to move such a large group of people. Simply telling them to move had been attempted when they set up on private property in nearby Roseland, and it had not solved the problem. County Mental Health was involved in working with the people on the trail as part of a larger County effort to provide housing. Temporary and permanent housing was offered for those who were being asked to move. The effort is ongoing with the temporary housing at Los Guillicos. Again, Peer Run Centers, especially the Wellness and Advocacy Center expanded to meet the needs of homeless with mental health challenges. All of the County Mental Health staff worked hard through this time.

The third disaster of this year was literally of global proportions. We are still as we speak in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic. It has been a mental health challenge to shelter in place, as it has been around the world. The county again stepped up to meet the disaster and by now, the experiences of the last few years made putting together emergency operations an all too familiar task. The County Mental Health system, along with other county agencies has adapted to Zoom and Webinar meetings and Telemedicine. We are in the middle of this newest challenge. Hopefully this year we will be able to return to a new “normal”.

The full implications of the Black Lives Matters movement in response to the death of George Floyd on May 25 have not yet been felt. Again, people across the world came together with a unified voice. Hopefully racial disparity will be addressed in a meaningful way in the year to come. Already, the steps being taken feel different than what has happened in the past. The County Mental Health system is already taking steps to address the fact that we are not serving a number of people of color proportional to the population of the county. New members have been recruited for the county Cultural Competency Committee. At least one of the new MHSA proposals addresses the need for better services to the Latinx community. Small steps forward in this area are starting to make a difference, but the Black Lives Matter movement has brought the conversation to the forefront. There will be more as this story develops.

In many ways, our resiliency as a county is very similar to Recovery as it is used in mental health terms. We bounce back, not to where we were before, but to a new normal. We have been changed by our experience, but not destroyed. As a Mental Health Board, we want to acknowledge the hard work that is and has been done to bring us to this point where we can still say “Sonoma Strong”

Kathy Smith, Mental Health Board Chair

Status of the Mental Health Board

Board Membership

The Mental Health Board is a mandated advisory board to be appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Membership is mandated to be 50% or more consumers and family members of those receiving mental health services. Of those, 20% must be consumers, and 20% family members. The remaining 50% may be community members. Our current membership consists of one peer, (one additional peer who will be appointed in July), two family members (one additional to be appointed in July), and nine community members. We have one vacancy. The next appointment should be a consumer (peer)

Our current membership includes one person who identifies as Hispanic and one who identifies as black. Their presence is a positive step toward increasing ethnic diversity. Increasing ethnic diversity is still a goal.

Meetings

Regular meetings were scheduled on the third Tuesday of each month except for August and December. A notice of all regular and special MHB meetings was made public and an agenda was followed which allowed for public comment. Regular meetings were held at “the Hub”, 2245 Challenger Way, in Santa Rosa. Meetings were also scheduled for the four outlying areas of the county. The Executive Committee met on the first Wednesday of every month except August. A working retreat was held in October and another was held in April. Mental Health Board meetings minutes are available on the county website.

Due to special circumstances, some meeting dates were changed. The following meetings were held.

Meetings held in 2019-2020

July 16, 2019	Guerneville- West County Issues Tim Miller, WCCS and Emelio Licea, WCHC presenters Peer Support Certification not signed by Gov. Newsom MST services added to West County
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August 21, 2019	Santa Rosa Finley Center
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MHSA Annual Update

Programs eliminated then restored with County support; Board and Care, Peer Run services

- September 18, 2019 Santa Rosa Finley Center
Elderly Suicide- Risks and Prevention
Patrick Arbore presenter
- October 15, 2019 Petaluma- South County Issues
Note: Only CA and SD, no Peer Support Certification
- November 19, 2019 Santa Rosa, The Hub
AB403 Continuum of Care- Nick Honey ; review of changes in Foster Care system
Kincaid fire response, PG&E outage, Smart Train suicides, SRJC/SRHS active shooter lockdown (busy month)
- December 2019 No meeting, Winter break
- January 21, 2020 Sonoma- La Luz
East County Issues, Karen Sellides presented about MST (Mobile Support Team) expansion to West and East County
- February 18, 2020 Santa Rosa, The Hub
Melissa presented
MHSA Steering Committee and the Capacity Assessment
- March 2020 Meeting Cancelled because of Covid-19 meeting restrictions
- April 2020 Meeting cancelled because of Covid-19 meeting restrictions (Normally North County issues)
- May 16, 2020 Mental Health Board virtual retreat (Zoom webinar)
Susan Wilson facilitator, Theresa Comstock, CALBHB/C
ACES training, Watched "Resilience" movie, discussed that and recent TV showing of "Bedlam" (as a result, new ad hoc committee formed in June to increase/improve communication with jail and law enforcement
- June 17, 2020 Virtual Meeting (Zoom)
North County Issues, Attended by Supervisor James Gore
Discussion of need for services such as MST in North County
Black Lives Matter protests happening in county/country

Committees and Board Representatives

Executive Committee (standing); Kathy Smith (chair), Richard Kirk (vice chair)
Although there are only two members of this standing committee, other board members are encouraged to attend.

QIC representative; Kathy Smith; A recommendation was made in June that the Vice Chair become the official QIC representative

California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards and Commissions representative; Sherry Weyers

MHSA Advisory/ Innovations representative; Kathy Smith

Program Assessment Matrix ad hoc committee; Richard Kirk, Shelley Hadley, Bob Cobb, Patricia Gray

ACES/ Trauma Informed Care presentation planning; Sherry Weyers, Kathy Smith
This presentation was planned for March and April meetings which were cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions. The presentation will happen at a later date.

Jail/ Law Enforcement ad hoc committee; Bob Hale, Carol West

Annual Report; Kathy Smith with board input

Nominating Committee; Bob Cobb, Becky Ennis, Sherry Weyers

Goals and Accomplishments

1. Goal: Review and evaluate the community's mental health needs, services, facilities, and special problems [5604.2(a)(1)] Welfare and Institutions Code WIC
Accomplishments:
 - Throughout the year, the Mental Health Board sponsored a variety of speakers related to Sonoma County Mental Health issues and services.
 - A public hearing for review and comment on the MHSA Annual update was held in August, and a MHSA three year plan hearing was held in May.
 - A new ad hoc committee was formed to improve our understanding and relationship with the jail and law enforcement which is not a behavioral health program, but serves many of our clients
2. Goal: Review any county agreement entered into pursuant to Section 5650 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.
Accomplishments:

- The PAM workgroup clarified the site visit evaluation process. Contracts for programs visited were reviewed prior to each visit.
 - Budget updates were given to the board by Bill Carter, Behavioral Health Director, and through review of MHSA budget
3. Goal: Advise the governing body and the local mental health director as to any aspect of the local mental health program
- Accomplishments:
- Individual MHB met with the Supervisor who appointed them when possible
 - Behavioral Health Director attended regular MHB meetings
 - A binder was put together and provided for Supervisors to refer to regarding MHB activities
 - It was much appreciated that Supervisor Gore attended a meeting held in his district. (We would like to increase contact and this will be a goal for next year.)
4. Goal: Review and approve the procedures used to ensure citizen and professional involvement at all stages of the planning process [WIC 5604.2(a)(4)]
- Accomplishments:
- The public was routinely invited to attend and participate in all monthly MHB meetings. Public comments, concerns, and questions were received from mental health consumers, stakeholders and advocates throughout the year.
 - Meetings were held in the county's outlying areas so that those areas could have input. Guerneville, Petaluma, and Sonoma meetings were held in person. The Cloverdale meeting was held via Zoom.
 - Meetings were held as much as possible in places that gave maximum opportunity for community participation. Although two meetings were missed due to Covid-19 restrictions, the board resumed meeting virtually with reasonable attendance.
 - Meeting agendas and minutes are posted on the Sonoma County website sonomacounty.ca.gov on the mental health board page.
5. Goal: Submit an annual report to the Board of Supervisors on the needs and performance of the county's mental health system.
- Accomplishment:
- A report was written and sent electronically to the supervisors. It was included in the binders in hard copy form that were shared with supervisors on visits made by MHB members. Presentation in person was planned and calendared multiple times, but emergencies in the form of actual declared disasters caused it to be delayed. This year's report is being written by Kathy Smith.

6. Goal: Review and comment on the county's performance outcome data and communicate its findings to the California Mental Health Planning Council (CMHPC)

Accomplishments;

- Completed the California Mental Health Planning Council's 2019 Data Notebook (copy available on CMHPC website and sonomacounty.ca.gov)

Acknowledgements:

This has been a busy and unpredictable year for everyone. The MHB appreciates the availability of Behavioral Health Director Bill Carter, even as he has been assigned to disaster duties. We especially appreciate Rhonda Darrow, senior office assistant, for her support of the board and for finding answers to almost any question we have asked. This has again been a difficult year because of the many literal disasters that the community has been faced with. We are probably only beginning to see the mental health needs that will rise as a result. We have spent the year in fight or flight mode, fleeing fire, improvising living without power, being pushed closer together in our seeking shelter, then farther apart as we continue to fight the pandemic. Families are either spending extraordinary amounts of time together, or equally extraordinary time apart. Children are not in school, parents are not "going" to work. All of this is going to impact the mental health needs of the community. We are seeing the tip of the iceberg. As a Mental Health Board we have acknowledged to each other how MANY people in the county system are working harder than ever, in new and challenging positions. Our thanks goes to all of them.