



Behavioral Health News

A newsletter relating activities of the Kings County Behavioral Health Agency .

Abraham Valencia, Editor

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **Special Edition!**
- **May is Mental Health Month**
- **Star Center Open House**
- **Outreach to Homeless**
- **SOAR**

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Special Edition!!!

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

California has faced many challenges in recent years due to a struggling economy and an ongoing state budget crisis. One result has been a strain on the state's safety net for those in need, particularly individuals with mental health needs.

May is Mental Health Month and Kings County Behavioral Health is joining the effort to spread the word about mental health issues and the importance of mental wellness for the **1 in 5 Californians** who report needing help with a mental or emotional health problem.

Without programs such as our **Full Service Partnership, Prevention & Early Intervention**, and others like it, the consequences of mental illness for individuals and California communities can be staggering: unnecessary disability, unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness, inappropriate incarceration, suicide and wasted lives.

Thanks to Proposition 63, though, many thousands of individuals with mental health issues are getting the services they need. Approved by voters in 2004, Proposition 63 – also known as the Mental Health Services Act - provides a fair funding mechanism, separate from the state's general fund, for a different approach to treating mental illness. Proposition 63 is responsible for a major shift in the way California provides mental health services -- away from a model that provided primarily crisis care and costly institutionalization, and toward a new system that includes a focus on wellness, recovery, prevention and early intervention.

Successful, cost-effective mental health services created with Proposition 63 funds exist across California, connecting physical health, substance use treatment, housing, education, and employment support. As a result, those programs are reducing homelessness, acute psychiatric hospitalizations, arrests and incarcerations.

It is important to remember that mental illnesses are not the result of personal weakness, lack of character or poor upbringing. However, even though mental health disorders are highly treatable, far too many people are reluctant to seek help from the dozens of quality, community-based programs that could lead to improved, productive lives.

Along with others, Kings County Behavioral Health is working to overcome the barriers many people face in dealing with a mental health condition: stigma, cultural gaps, lack of information, and the high cost -- or lack -- of health insurance coverage.

Severe budget cuts have been made to our community mental health system and other safety-net programs, making Proposition 63 the backbone of California's mental health delivery system. Proposition 63 improves the lives of thousands of our fellow citizens every day and that, in turn, benefits all Californians.

YOU AND YOUR AGENCY ARE INVITED! TO THE OPEN HOUSE OF

KINGS COUNTY
behavioral health

STAR Center

Screenings, Therapy, Assessments & Resources



WHEN: TUESDAY MAY 22, 2012
11am TO 1:30pm

WHERE: 450 KINGS COUNTY DR. SUITE 102
HANFORD, CA 93230

RSVP: Mayra Lopez, 559-852-2415
mayra.lopez@countyofkings.com

*Come and join us for light snacks and refreshments
along with an informational tour and more...*



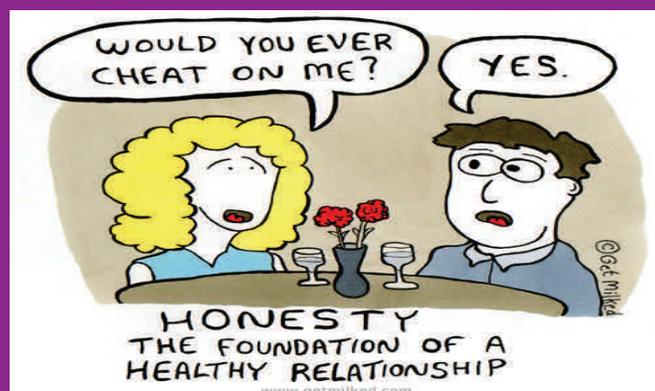
Life Steps Skill Building Group at the Star Center

The purpose of the Life Steps groups are to provide both English and Spanish speaking adults and teens with an opportunity for personal growth. The group is set up to help each parent develop awareness, skills, education, and the opportunity to take a look at themselves in an effort to improve their relationships. Again, **the focus is establishing a positive relationship with their children and themselves.** It will also provide the same focus to children and teens to help them understand their role in the home. The eight week course has been developed and prepared to begin in the month of June.



The **eight week course** is a parenting skill course based on the CBT model which provides the individuals with the ability to learn how to problem solve. During the design of the group curriculum, it seemed important to also provide the participants with a therapeutic space to work on processing their own feelings and thoughts, which can be overwhelming but yet, healing. Furthermore, group activities were added, such as group presentations to work on problem solving and skill development, art therapy, relaxation imagery techniques as part of the learning process, and education. The education piece is very crucial in the group setting because, hopefully, the awareness will help develop a more consistent and sound parenting style for each parent while clarifying family roles for children and teens. **This program was developed** by MFT Intern **Blanca Alvarez.**

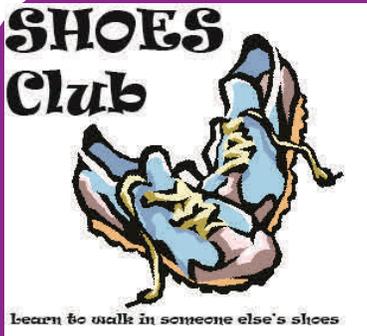
Interpersonal Skills for Dummies



Problems can severely damage a relationship over time if they are not dealt with properly. Negative patterns can develop quickly and unresolved issues can hinder relationships. This interpersonal skill group provides it's participants the tools, insight, and information needed to improve interpersonal skills and restore love & respect. Each session covers an important relationship area that is common to all.

Topics to be discussed include the following: Different Types of Relationships, Jealousy/Insecurities, Games People Play/ On the Rebound, Cheating/ Forgiveness, Boundaries, Trust & Respect, Self-Esteem/ Self Perception, Change/ Communication, and Fighting Fairly. These topics will be addressed in a time frame of 10 weeks, to a maximum of 10 clients, 8 Behavioral Health clients and 2 outside referrals which will be assessed for a mental health diagnosis if they don't have one. Prior to anyone participating in the group, a screening will take place to determine if the client is appropriate for the group.

This group will be facilitated by Behavioral Health Staff: **Martha Renteria, MFT Intern and Dee Dee Sanchez, Recovery Support Coordinator.** This group is scheduled to start May 24. If you would like to receive more information regarding this group or the Life Steps group, contact Behavioral Health at **852-2376.**



“Learn to walk in someone else’s shoes” by Cela Nichols

The SHOES Club (Students Helping Overcoming Educating Serving) is a lunch hour club at Martin Luther King Elementary School, open to 4th thru 6th graders. This club was started on February 20, 2012, and is a new program in the experimental stage.

The idea behind the club is to get students involved with each other and to build a sense of connection with their school. The main focus of the club is to raise awareness about bullying, and to let the students take ownership of the club operations and use their creativity.

We are putting the finishing touches on a newsletter, “SHOES Club News”, that contains five articles written by club members. The articles are about ways to help someone being bullied, what to do if you are being bullied, and the dangers of drugs.

The club members have created a bullying survey that was distributed to the 4th thru 6th grade classes, and the teacher in each class selected five students to take the survey. Each club member was also responsible for completing two surveys by interviewing other students. All of the questions on the survey were from the club members themselves.

We now hope to create and video record 2 PSA’s against bullying. Additionally, the club members will be wearing t-shirts in the PSA’s with the club logo and the club motto, “Learn to walk in someone else’s shoes.” The t-shirts will also have other mottos printed on them that were chosen by the club members.

In closing, I will end with one motto that I found especially insightful: CREATE HOPE, NOT HURT.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is mental illness and how common is it?

A diagnosis of mental illness is made by professionals using validated indicators of psychological distress and impairment due to emotional problems. In common terms, mental illness can be understood as psychological distress that impairs everyday activities including work, chores, social lives, and relationships. A 2005 study showed that nearly one in five (around 4.9 million) adults in California reported needing help for a mental or emotional health problem.

UCLA Center for Health Policy Research.
Adult Mental Health Needs in California,

Why does stigma matter when it comes to mental health?

Stigma can lead to discrimination at work or schools, bullying or harassment, denial of health coverage for mental illness, etc. Stigma can prevent people from seeking help or set back their recovery. Prop. 63/the Mental Health Services Act puts an emphasis on reducing stigma so more people feel comfortable getting the support they need. *Behavioral Health has a campaign in place at the Hanford Movies 8 cinema to address stigma and bullying.*

Mayo Clinic: Overcoming the Stigma of Mental Illness, n.d.
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/mental-health/MH00076>

How common is suicide?

Nationally, suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth between 10-24 years of age. But suicide isn’t limited to young people, in fact, older adults, particularly men over the age of 75, have the highest rate of suicide (42.8 per 100,000). More Californians have died by suicide than by homicide. Nine Californians lose their lives to suicide on an average day (approximately 3000 per year). By comparison, eleven lives are claimed daily in traffic collisions

California Dept. of Mental Health, Office of Suicide Prevention



Full Service Partnership – Outreach to Homeless on May 2, 2012

In the spirit of partnership and collaboration, Kings County Behavioral Health (KCBH) was called on to provide support to other agencies in meeting the needs of the community. **Kings County Sheriff's Office, Kings County Probation Department, Union Pacific Police, Kings**

View Counseling, and Kings County Behavioral Health, represented by Minerva Coltra, Deedee Sanchez and David Chavez, walked through the bamboo groves of Armona to reach out to the homeless population. Some homeless individuals have set up living areas in the bamboo brush near the

railroad tracks. Kings County Sheriff Deputies were tasked to inform those living in this area that Union Pacific has planned to clear out and remove all vegetation. The transient population was to be given ample notice so that belongings and personal items could be removed and safeguarded. Naturally, this could have created some tense exchanges for those who met with the threat of having their living areas removed. Behavioral Health was present to provide support to community partners and to community members by disseminating



information on resources and offering linkage to services to those affected. Of note, Minerva Coltra stepped up as the lead for Behavioral Health. Along with orchestrating KCBH's involvement in this collaboration, Minerva utilized a caring and empathetic approach in providing information to access services to those who were interested. As some living areas appeared to be vacant at the time of



the initial outreach, another outreach event is planned for the end of May. Kings County Behavioral Health continually strives to treat all members of the community with dignity and respect and to collaborate and partner with local agencies in promoting wellness and fostering a sense of community.

We're at the Farmers Market!

Visit us at the Thursday Night Marketplace and check out our informational booth. We will be there on the following dates: **May 24, 31, June 14, 28, July 19, August 9, 30, September 13, 27**

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR): An Overview



The Issue

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) are disability income benefits administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) that generally also provide either Medicaid and/or Medicare health insurance to individuals who are eligible.

For people who are homeless with mental health problems that impair cognition, or who are returning to the community from institutions (jails, prisons or hospitals), access to these programs can be extraordinarily challenging. The application process for SSI/SSDI is complicated and difficult to navigate. Nationally, about 37 percent of individuals who apply for these benefits are approved on initial application. Appeals take an average of 2 years to complete. Yet, accessing these benefits is often a critical first step in recovery.

A Solution

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) is a strategy that helps states to increase access to mainstream benefits for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness through training, technical assistance and strategic planning. SOAR currently works in 34 states and has replicated a model that has resulted in success rates on initial application of 71 percent, compared to the usual 10-15 percent for applicants who are homeless.

SOAR Is A Different Model That Includes...

- ◆ Collaboration and strategic planning among key stakeholders
- ◆ Training of case managers to assist applicants and gather evidence proactively
- ◆ A step-by-step explanation of SSI application and disability determination process
- ◆ A list of critical components for success; the greater the number of critical components implemented, the higher the rate of success
- ◆ A train-the-trainer program allows for expansion and sustainability
- ◆ Focusing on documenting disability for the initial application. Get it right the first time!
- ◆ Avoiding appeals
- ◆ Providing follow-up observation, technical assistance, and feedback for State's initial training and ongoing technical support for action plan implementation
- ◆ Tracking outcomes to document success and to help access additional resources

Initial Impact and Outcomes across 32 States

- ◇ As of 2009, 3,158 applications or 71 percent of those assisted were approved in an average of 89 days
- ◇ In 2009 alone, SSI/SSDI brought a minimum of \$25 million into these state and local communities.

Elizabeth Barrera and Deedee Sanchez were selected to attend a Train the Trainers 4-day workshop to **provide training to agencies in Kings and Tulare counties** working with homeless or are at risk of being homeless and suffering mental health issues.

On April 11 and 12, 2012 the first SOAR training was provided to several agencies in Kings and Tulare counties. Many of the agencies present already provide SSI/SSDI application assistance but were interested in the SOAR model, hoping to increase approvals and have questions answered about the application process. The Department of Disability Services was also present during the morning part of day 1 and answered questions for the audience. All who were in attendance have the same goal and that is to gain the knowledge to increase access to SSI and SSDI for people with disabilities who experience or are at risk for homelessness. Expediting benefits can create a foundation for recovery that allows people who are homeless to find and maintain permanent housing, explore treatment options, experience hope, achievements and self-sufficiency. If you have any questions regarding SOAR, please contact Elizabeth Barrera at ext. 2385 or Dee Dee Sanchez at ext. 2443.



Find Us

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