

Report on activities to date, New York City Regional Multicultural Advisory Committee of the New York State Office of Mental Health

September 4, 2015

[Christian Huygen](#), Ph.D., Co-Chair, Executive Director, Rainbow Heights Club,

This report will summarize the activities of the NYC RMAC so far in 2015. We meet quarterly, in February, May, August and November.

At our February meeting, Somjen Frazer, a consultant with Strength in Numbers Consulting, gave a brief description of the current statewide assessment she is conducting of the health and human service needs of LGBT New Yorkers. She asked about what current and emerging needs we are seeing, as well as opportunities. We had a very good 15 minute discussion. We also viewed and discussed the BCC webinar “Bridging Cultural Distance with Interpreters.” The presentation was helpful and brought up a number of questions: What are current OMH policies and guidelines about interpretation, especially at small agencies? What are the criteria for an adequately skilled interpreter, including an adequately skilled interpreter of ASL? How are small agencies to meet the challenge of paying for interpretation services? Are OMH funds or resources available?

At our May 2015 meeting, we viewed the OMH BCC webinar on “adapting treatment to culturally diverse youth.” The webinar was powerful, incisive and comprehensive. It touched on the fact that systems are often resistant to change, and pointed out that addressing this resistance is a crucial part of making progress. We felt the webinar would have been more powerful and engaging if it included video of the presenter, rather than just showing the powerpoint slides while we listened to the presenter talk.

In August 2015, we viewed part of the webinar *The New Warrior: Combat Stress and Wellness* on PTSD in veterans. We also viewed *Hope for Recovery*, a video about Theater of War, and a video about Trauma Exposure, PTSD and Violence. A discussion of issues and questions brought up by the videos including supports, formal and informal, available and unavailable, for veterans and their families, and the need to provide supports and services to assist veterans who are transitioning out of combat and into civilian life. We gained multiple perspectives on complex trauma from viewing these videos and from our discussion.

We discussed the invitation extended to 4-5 members of each regional MAC to attend the December Statewide MAC meeting on December 14, 2015 in Albany. Of the six people present, two (Bert and Christian) are already members of the SMAC, and the remaining four (Enid Lugo, Katherine Penn, Constance Brown-Bellamy, and Suzanne Stoute) have been participating consistently in the NYC RMAC and would make excellent participants in this meeting. All agreed to attend (with Katherine doing so on a tentative basis). Stakeholder

issues of interest to us include treatment engagement and treatment refusal; managed care implementation; care coordination for those who are severely ill or incapacitated; and understanding upstate and downstate perspectives and the ways in which these may not always translate or transfer well to different contexts and settings within the state.

Regarding future meetings and webinars, we are interested in learning about understanding Islam, Hinduism, and African religions and cultures, as well as how to respond in an affirming and culturally supportive way, and respectfully invite discussion of people's backgrounds. Possible resources include [this webinar on Islam and Caring for the Muslim Patient](#) (the webinar is for pharmacists but it contains the content we are interested in learning about) and [this article](#) from the journal Professional Psychology on "Islam 101: Understanding the Religion, and Therapy Implications."

If you are aware of other resources please let us know. Next meeting date: 11/12/15.

Respectfully submitted,

Christian Huygen, Ph.D.

Co-Chair

New York City Regional Multicultural Advisory Committee