

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,
christianhuygen@rainbowheights.org

This report will summarize the activities of the NYC RMAC so far in 2015. We meet quarterly, in February, May, August and November. The co-chairs are Christian Huygen and Bert Coffman.

Each meeting takes place at the NYC Field Office of the New York State Office of Mental Health, 330 Fifth Avenue. We are very grateful to be able to have our meetings there and we appreciate the excellent audio/visual facilities. Our meetings are usually attended by 7-15 stakeholders. At each meeting we present a webinar or training, often drawn from the OMH Bureau of Cultural Competency's website, and then discuss these and related issues of cultural competency and the amelioration or elimination of disparities.

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 even 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. This webinar was available from the Veterans Administration website for providers. 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.

Also at our August meeting, we discussed the invitation extended by OMH and the BCC to 3-4 members of each regional MAC to attend the March 2016 Statewide MAC meeting in Albany. The purpose of this participation would be (1) to increase mutual understanding and alignment between the statewide MAC and the regional MACs; (2) to include members of the regional MACs in the planning process for the year; and (3) to give regional participants a sense of what goes on at a statewide MAC meeting and begin the process of assessing whether there is interest among some of these people in becoming members of the statewide MAC.

Of the six people present at the August NYC Regional MAC meeting, 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.

At our November 12, 2015 meeting, we viewed a webinar on “Islam and meeting the needs of Muslim recipients of care”

<https://acp.adobeconnect.com/a946482050/p5d859y1ig4/?launcher=false&fcsContent=true&pbMode=normal> , and read and discussed this article

<http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic551849.files/Ali%20Liu%20and%20Humedian.pdf> from the journal Professional Psychology on “Islam 101: Understanding the Religion, and Therapy Implications.”

There’s also a helpful document at the NKI website – they’ve got informative materials about many of the populations that we serve here, this is an extensive document on Muslim Americans:

<http://ssrdqst.rfmh.org/cecc/index.php?q=node/25>

We found the webinar and article to be very helpful and illuminating, and we recommend them to our colleagues. It’s important to show respect, to apologize when we make a mistake, and to be willing to learn from our clients and each other.

Our next meeting will be on February 9, 2016. Subsequent meetings will be on the second Tuesdays in May, August, and November. We identified the following issue for our next meeting, in February 2016: Homeless youth and mental health. Here are some potential resources we may view:

- a. Webinar on Engaging homeless youth: Recommendations and resources <https://www.nhchc.org/2015/07/engaging-homeless-youth-recommendations-and-resources/>
- b. Engaging Homeless Youth resource list <http://www.nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/youth-resource-list.pdf>
- c. Identifying and serving LGBTQ Youth: Case studies of runaway and homeless youth program grantees http://www.nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/rpt_lgbtq_rhy.pdf

We are also interested in the following topics for future meetings:

1. African American elders and mental health
2. Medicaid managed care changes and how they will impact recipients of care
3. Native American / First Nations peoples and mental health
4. Judaism and meeting the needs of orthodox and reform recipients of care
5. Domestic and international human trafficking
6. Latinos and mental health

The New York City Regional Multicultural Advisory Committee continues as a venue for ongoing education about and discussion of issues in cultural competency in behavioral health.

Respectfully submitted,



Christian Huygen, Ph.D.

Co-Chair

New York City Regional Multicultural Advisory Committee