

Minutes, May 14, 2015, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

New York City Regional Multicultural Advisory Committee Meeting of the
New York State Office of Mental Health Bureau of Cultural Competency

New York City Field Office of New York State Office of Mental Health, 330
Fifth Avenue, Ninth Floor, New York City

The purpose of the New York City OMH Regional Multicultural Advisory Committee is to provide stakeholder input to the New York State Office of Mental Health and its Bureau of Cultural Competency on issues, challenges and opportunities within multicultural behavioral health care, including disparities and best practices, with an emphasis on proposing solutions rather than merely identifying problems. All stakeholders are welcome to attend.

Christian Huygen and Bert Coffman, co-chairs
Frances Priester Moss, NYS OMH Bureau of Cultural Competency

Minutes taken by Christian Huygen christianhuygen@rainbowheights.org

1. Go around: Ask people to introduce themselves and briefly state what brought them here today. We had a very rich discussion of our advocacy goals. People are seeking a better understanding of the needs of youth, particularly LGBT youth, and how to engage youth in programs we have designed for them. We are also interested in the fact that agencies and administrations are often resistant to change and to embracing best practices in culturally competent care, and we feel strongly that education, training and support are needed for all staff, including reception, maintenance and security staff, who are often a big part of our consumers' experience of care.
2. Review and approval of minutes from February 2015 meeting. The minutes were unanimously approved.
3. Discussion of how to motivate change in our organizations. We need to know who the key players are, and what arguments will motivate them. Sharing our own stories of trauma, illness and recovery can lessen the us/them dynamic that sometimes arises. Trauma informed care is a powerful force for recovery. Having hope and seeing a future for troubled kids is crucial in engaging them in care. Conversely, compassion fatigue and vicarious traumatization in ourselves or our colleagues can make it hard to have good outcomes. We need to make youth feel supported, not judged. And we need to understand and acknowledge our own biases and perspectives.
4. We viewed the OMH BCC webinar on *adapting treatment to culturally diverse youth* (1.25 hour)

- a. The webinar was powerful, incisive and comprehensive. It touched on the fact that systems are often resistant to change, and 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. We also want to know how to convince our administrators to engage in the kinds of change processes the video recommends.
 - b. We decided to view future webinars in 30 minute segments, with breaks and discussion in between.
 - c. Discussion of issues and questions brought up by the webinar. Staff must represent the people we serve; when they see us they must see themselves. We have to meet people where they are. Clients must take ownership of their own treatment. Treatment goals and planning must be focused on them. Consumer advisory committees can help agencies move forward if they are meaningful and substantive. In some agencies the racial or cultural background of MHTAs may be different from that of clinical staff; sometimes clients say “how can you understand me if you don’t look like me?” Systems must take into account the enormous challenges and burdens that single parents often face. Culturally competent education must be meaningful, not just a superficial “taco Tuesday” celebration of different cultures’ food and music.
5. Discussion of next topic: Veterans and PTSD.
- a. Discussion and selection of webinar(s) for upcoming meeting(s). We agreed to view two videos from the Veterans Administration <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/index.asp> at our August 13 meeting; we may continue with other videos about specific racial/cultural populations and women at our December meeting. To be discussed.
6. Next meeting dates: 8/13/15, 11/12/15 All meetings will be held at 330 Fifth Avenue, Ninth Floor. We are very grateful for the NYC Field Office’s hospitality, and A/V assistance so that we could view and hear the webinar.
7. Adjournment at or before 1 p.m.: The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christian Huygen

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