



# CULTURAL COMPETENCY UPDATE

*...a newsletter to address cultural issues that enable us to effectively work in cross cultural situations.*

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## Sheriff's Department Inmate Mental Health Program

By Gregg Clifton- Lieutenant Commander

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**BHRS Cultural Competence Oversight Committee meets on the 2nd Monday of each month from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in the Redwood Room, 800 Scenic Drive**

The Sheriff's Department operates a Mental Health Unit at the Public Safety Center (PSC) Jail Facility; while not a treatment unit, allows for the protection and care of inmates with mental illness by separating them from the general population. A decade ago, Stanislaus County was awarded 1.7 million dollars by the state of California to fund a Mentally Ill Offender Crime Reduction Grant (MIOCRG) program. This program created a Mental Health Court and fostered partnerships and teams pulled from the District Attorney's Office, Public Defender, Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, Probation, Contract Medical Providers, and Law Enforcement. Although the grant money was terminated more than four years ago, the program proved successful, is still in place and supported by internal funding within the County and Sheriff's Department, and has actually grown here in Stanislaus County.



The Adult Detention Division staffs three Mental Health Deputy positions, Deputy Dixon and Deputy Zamora at the PSC and Deputy Burns at the Men's Jail. The primary responsibility of these deputies is to monitor, assist, and provide care for inmates with mental illness. The deputies track all inmates with mental health issues within the correctional system, those being transferred to other facilities, state hospitals, DMC, DBHC, CERT, PHF, Probation, etc. The goal is to identify and get inmates with severe mental illness (SMI) stabilized so the inmate can navigate the court process, be moved to a general population setting, and into Mental Health Court or other programs that are available, including group counseling sessions directed by onsite BHRS staff. This population is also monitored and assisted post

release with the goal of ensuring medication and services are available as well as reducing the occurrences of incarceration.

Often times, the deputies are assisting in grooming, cell-cleaning, face-to-face contact, attending Mental Health Court, assisting Probation, transports to medical and treatment appointments and providing general care for this population. The deputies coordinate with mental health staff and other professionals each day and assist in providing practitioners' access to each inmate while providing the necessary safety and security required in a jail setting.

Training is ongoing and the Mental Health Deputies complete a forty-hour intensive Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) academy, which is the foundation of the program, and prepares first responders in situations involving individuals experiencing an emotional disturbance. The deputies learn about a variety of mental disorders and other disabilities, visit mental health facilities, and learn the concepts of crisis intervention while adhering to officer safety. The deputies are integral in working closely with our contract medical provider, California Forensic Medical Group (CFMG), and staff from Behavior Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) to ensure incarcerated inmates with mental illness have ready access to proper care and treatment.

The deputies assigned to this three year position have all expressed their satisfaction in providing a service that makes a difference in inmates' lives, and you can see the smile on both the deputies and inmates faces at each Mental Health Court graduation ceremony. Many letters of gratitude have been received by these deputies from former program participants that have expressed thanks for the treatment, care and positive influence on their lives. This program works, and above all it makes a difference.

## Highlights of May Cultural Equity and Social Justice Committee (CESJC) Meeting



**Champion Award & Criteria Name**—Ruben encouraged everyone to nominate someone who is contributing to the cultural competency efforts in the community. See nomination selection criteria when making your nominations. This award will still be called the Cultural Competence Champion Award. The next time the award is presented, it will have the new name, CESJC, and a revised criteria.

**Stanislaus County Promising Practice Project**—Ruben introduced Daniel Esparza. Mr. Esparza provided information on the Stanislaus County Promising Practice Project which focuses on research, recommendations, assisting and supporting various cultures/populations in engagement and community connection. Mr. Esparza shared that The Center for Dignity, Recovery and Empowerment recently partnered with the Stanislaus County Promotoras.

**CLAS Implementation Update**—Ruben reported BHRS is still waiting for the state to provide guidance or direction regarding the release of the revised CLAS Plan. Ruben suggested we continue to provide trainings on CLAS standards at the programs and continue to map and index progress.

If you have questions or suggestions regarding Cultural Competency, please forward them by e-mail to:

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