



CULTURAL COMPETENCY UPDATE

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

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The Empowerment Center; Approaching a New Chapter, a Time to Reflect on Our History and Embrace all That Arises

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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

As The Empowerment Center closes one chapter in our book of “progress”, we look forward to opening a new page of future endeavors! Moving soon to a new location (at the corner of Needham and Olive Avenue in Modesto), the Empowerment Center will soon occupy a building with another Turning Point Program: Turning Point’s ISA-Integrated Services Agency. We look forward to the concept of cohabitating with a clinically based program and complimenting each other’s services. The concept is not new and is already a very successful model based in Long Beach, known as the MHA (Mental Health America) Village.

The move reminds us about the progressive steps we have made since inception in 2006. The original name of the center: The Consumer Employment and Empowerment Center began as a transformation and expansion of the existing Behavioral Health and Recovery Services consumer drop-in center, Common Ground. “The Center will be for all consumer and family organizations and eventually will be staffed by consumers. Employment services will focus on assisting individuals with goals related to volunteerism, supported employment and competitive employment options. This General System Development program will serve transition age youth, adults and older adults.” As stated in the Board of Supervisor’s Action Agenda Summary in 2005.



It is with great support and continuous adaptation to the needs of our members that the Empowerment Center has developed customized support to meet the mission statement of the Drop in Center. Through the years, changes have occurred and learning conversations have taken place to encourage leadership amongst the members themselves. Increased community awareness and participation has paved the way for new relationships and a positive connection to educating others and battling stigma. Members have shared stories of ownership and movement toward a healthier journey in their mental health as well as to better understand their struggles and challenges they face.

The Empowerment Center is excited to continue these conversations at our new location and reach out to our future neighbors. Nestled between Josie’s Place and Wellness, The Empowerment Center is eager to develop a deeper connection with our activities and events (so be sure to keep your eyes on your email)!



Several of our members have shared their heart-felt stories to inspire others and share their experiences to bring to light the opportunities that are available for them. Here are a few commentaries of our folk's stories:

"I tried to commit suicide like 3 years ago. I had a lot of family issues going on. My oldest son was taken away and was in foster care. I came to the Empowerment Center and was able to talk. They listened to me and wasn't judgmental, they gave me friendship and words of encouragement. I got help with my SSI. I began talking with CPS and they helped set me up with rehab and Section 8. The Empowerment Center helped me out when I didn't know what else to do."



"Being a recovering addict and back on the streets...I am very thankful for the Empowerment Center. The great staff, groups and resources they have has me looking forward to coming in every day. I am learning how to be there for others, but mostly for myself too. I am learning coping skills and how to make me feel better about myself. I am positive that when the time comes and I move forward in my life it will be a lot because I know I can succeed and grow."

"I just want to express to you the importance of the Empowerment Center. I thought all resources for me were few and far between. I was told about the center and when I stepped in the front door, I was treated like a human being. Through the center, I was able to apply for GA, Unemployment, and different jobs. I also used their support groups. The staff worked hard and I did the leg work. They gave me hope and a sense of purpose."

The Empowerment Center has worked as a catalyst for folks to advocate for their mental health and reach for their goals. We are truly fortunate to continue this legacy and inspire members and their loved ones to find their "voice" in what makes them happy and healthy. As a program that stems from support and advocacy, the Empowerment Center will continue to foster self and collective leadership to enhance the conversations taking place in our community.

Highlights of September Cultural Competency, Equity and Social Justice Committee (CCESJC) Meeting



- * Dr. Madelyn Schlaepfer presented certificates to the Cultural Competency, Equity and Social Justice Champion Award winner and nominee for the third quarter 2014 Champion Award. The Champion Award winner was Vanessa Lopez, BHRS and the nominee was Maria Lourdes Perez, CHS Promotoras Coordinator.
- * Ruben Imperial presented a PowerPoint presentation entitled 2014 Mental Health Services Act New Programs & Expansions, *Strengthening Commitment to Cultural Competency, Equity and Social Justice*. Ruben shared a brief overview of the programs expanding services in our county. The PowerPoint presentation will be posted on the Intranet/ Extranet.
- * Ruben Imperial reported the CCESJC committee is moving forward to develop an updated Cultural Competency Plan. Ruben informed the committee members the planning process will be discussed at the next meeting.
- * Ruben Imperial will review the CCESJC roster. He requested BHRS programs and contract agencies have a representative present at the CCESJC meetings. Ruben suggested every program assign an alternate in the event the primary is unable to attend.
- * Ruben Imperial requested the committee form a workgroup to review and revise the current CCESJC mission.

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

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