

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

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CHIP Title: Creating a County-Wide Group Therapy Network (MCBH)

Project Description:

My project aims to provide access to Countywide therapy groups for adults suffering from severe mental illness. Monterey County Behavioral Health (MCBH) Adult System functions within regional silos composed of 4 different regional clinics in Salinas, Marina, Soledad, and King City. Currently, a behavioral health client can only obtain therapy group services offered by a regional clinic actively serving the client.

My project will create a cohesive network of therapy group services that can be offered to any behavioral health client within the Monterey County adult care system- regardless of which region serves the client. The referral form will be a simple cloud-based excel sheet on Microsoft Teams application. Every MCBH regional office already utilizes the same electronic health record system (AVATAR) and the same billing codes; thus, offering county-wide group therapy services to all Monterey County behavioral consumers is a no-brainer!

By utilizing a network of shared group resources, our adult behavioral health system will achieve the following goals:

1. Strengthen inter-regional collaborations.
2. Provide MCBH client's a diverse list of available therapy groups across all regions.
3. Leverage the expertise and creativity of our master-level clinical staff/social worker team across Monterey County Behavioral Health.

Monterey County residents already view our entire agency as one large entity- it's time we (MCBH) actually as one cohesive adult care system.

Key Findings and Lessons Learned:

- Collaboration is key! "win-win" approach was essential to get buy-in from other regional clinics.
- Managers listened to our direct line staff's needs. Our county therapist/social workers requested flexibility and creativity and wanted to focus on client-centered care and not solely on increasing agency revenue (billing and productivity). However, by default, more group therapy services = increased Medi-Cal services/claims.
- "KISS"-*Keep it Super Simple*. I created an easy, straightforward excel referral log that lives on the Microsoft Teams application. The client's ID, referring region, and staff name are all required for a referral. The referring part is then responsible for providing transportation support.
- "Change is the only constant"- I needed to extend our anticipated start date many times due to COVID-19 impact on our workforce and our agency-wide vacancy rates.

Next Steps:

- Kickoff group therapy schedule set to begin the week of October 1, 2022
- Key objectives moving forward:
 - Minimum of at least 25 adults with SMI will be referred inter-regionally every quarter.
 - No more than two groups will be canceled across all regions due to low client participation.
 - Group service billing will increase by at least 10% in every regional clinic.
- This project laid a foundational framework for possible inter-regional multi-disciplinary teams. A shared model can help mediate the current staffing crises in significantly impacted regions and assure all consumers continue to obtain vital behavioral health services.