

CaMHSA

Overview of African-American Spirituality Initiative

April 17, 2013



+ Faith and Mental Wellness – Partnering for Success

“Faith is rooted in the traditions, beliefs and values of most cultures. It shapes world views and provides an important way for people in the community to come together and receive information. When experiencing mental illness, people often return to their faith-based roots for support to understand their illness. Faith-based initiatives offer great opportunities for organizations to partner with institutions of faith to share information with parishioners on recovery and resiliency for overall wellness.”

Ohio Department of Mental Health

+ Understanding the Issues

- To better understand the cultural nuances of stigma and discrimination in the African-American community, and to identify best practices, potential partners and solidify our strategic direction, Hill & Company assembled extensive resources and information:
 - Conducted informational interviews with individuals and organizations throughout the state including:
 - Mental health professionals
 - Community based organizations
 - Partners from the CaIMHSA project team
 - Faith leaders
 - Individuals with lived experience of mental illness
 - Performed literature reviews of key studies and background materials
 - Brainstormed strategic communications approaches to address issues

+ Key Findings

- Mental health stigma and discrimination experienced by African Americans create barriers to seeking treatment:
 - The high incidence of unaddressed trauma in the African-American community can contribute to mental health challenges and a need for treatment.
 - Open discussion of mental health challenges is often a cultural taboo; resistance stems from fear of further discrimination when admitting to or seeking help for a mental health diagnosis.
 - Historical distrust of healthcare institutions fuels distrust of mental health services and further ignites stigma.
 - Restrictive treatment settings can disempower and re-traumatize those being served, leading to more distrust of mental health services.

+ Key Findings

- Rather than relying on the mental health system to address their needs, many African Americans draw support from faith, family and communities.
 - 88% of African-American consumers and family members agree or strongly agree that “spirituality is important to my/my family member’s mental health.” –*CA Mental Health & Spirituality Initiative Consumer and Family Survey, 2010*
- We heard repeatedly that “harnessing the power of the faith community” for delivering messages of support, education and hope is the most effective way to address stigma and discrimination for African Americans.

+ Initiative Objective

- To reduce stigma and discrimination related to mental health challenges among African Americans through an inclusive faith-based initiative that creates “mental health-friendly congregations” and identifies local resources to sustain them.

+ Recommended Tactics

- Research indicates that some of the best ways to address stigma in the African-American community are:
 - “Go where the people are,” rather than asking them to come to a mental health center.
 - Churches have an incredible power to deliver the message, but faith/spiritual leaders need to be trained and equipped with tools to recognize and support people with mental health challenges.
 - Messages of hope, resiliency and recovery should be delivered by consumers and family members with lived experience and through trusted and relevant spokespersons.
 - Building community/family support structures and sharing stories of overcoming challenges are what most effectively break down stigma and add to community resiliency.
 - Initiatives need to build local capacity to be sustainable.

+ Target Audiences

- Target audiences:
 - Faith leaders
 - Mental health providers
 - Consumers/clients
 - Family members
 - Congregants of African-American faith institutions
 - Community leaders who are invested in the overall health and well-being of African Americans.

+ Training Team Profile

- Hill & Company's experienced training team has had great success in developing a culturally responsive curriculum and providing technical assistance to some of the largest and most influential African-American churches in Alameda County.
- **PASTOR HORACIO S. JONES** – Senior Pastor, Family Bible Fellowship, Newark, CA and President/CEO Tri Cities Community Development Center
- **MINISTER MONIQUE TARVER** – Mental Health and Spirituality Trainer/Wellness Educator and Co-Chair of the CA Statewide Mental Health and Spirituality Initiative
- **GIGI R. CROWDER, L.E.** – Ethnic Services Manager, Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services and facilitator of Alameda County's *African American Utilization Report*.

+ Pilot Communities

- Four communities were selected to pilot the Spirituality Initiative, including:
 - Bay Area
 - Fresno
 - Sacramento
 - San Bernardino/Riverside
- These communities contain some of the largest populations of African Americans in the state, cover a broad geographical area and have faith and community leaders willing to develop strategic alliances for a sustainable stigma reduction initiative.

+ Plan Overview

- Step 1 – Community Action Assessment
- Step 2 – Kickoff Events and Trainings
- Step 3 – Clergy Roundtables
- Step 4 – Mental Wellness Ministries
- Step 5 – Local Resource Guides
- Step 6 – Culturally Focused Media Campaign
- Step 7 – Program Evaluation

+ Plan Overview

Step 1: Conduct a Community Action Assessment

- Identify local resources; establish collaborative relationships
- Work with REMHDCO to identify potential health-related partners
- Conduct key informant interviews to assess community needs

Step 2: Organize and Facilitate Community Kickoff Events and Trainings

- Invite community leaders, county mental health directors, ethnic services managers (ESMs), faith leaders, consumers, family members, and media to attend the regional kickoff event
- Elicit support and buy-in for the Spirituality Initiative
- Provide education and training
- Create linkages with key resources

+ Mental Health-Friendly Curriculum

- To become a “Mental-Health Friendly Congregation,” participating churches must complete four distinct training modules.

Mental Health-Friendly Curriculum

Training	Audience	Description
Mental Health 101	Pastors/ Ministers	Broadens the competency of spiritual/faith leaders as first responders to mental health crises, and inspires leaders to create welcoming communities for individuals and families living with mental health challenges. Corrects misinformation and educates faith leaders to recognize signs and symptoms and provide better support for those with mental health concerns.
Spirituality 101	Mental Health Providers	Builds understanding among mental health and allied health professionals of the important role of faith in mental health care for African-American consumers and families. Focuses on how to include spirituality as a resource for wellness, recovery and multicultural competency. Also facilitates development of a provider network to partner with the faith community in addressing specific needs of African Americans.
Keepers of the Flock	Church Leaders/ Congregants	Incorporates elements of Mental Health 101, for church representatives to build a climate of understanding and acceptance of mental illness and an awareness of the path toward mental wellness.
A Bridge Over Troubled Waters	CBOs/ Providers/ Churches	Bridges the divide between the clinical approach to mental illness and the spiritual approach that supports a journey toward wellness. Provides historical perspective for development of faith within the African-American experience.

+ Plan Overview

Step 3: Conduct Clergy Roundtables

- Invite Pastors/Ministers and Health Ministry Leaders from churches throughout the area to attend the event
- Provide a forum to address relevant issues and educate clergy
- Introduce the concept of “Mental Health-Friendly Congregations”
- Recruit interested churches that meet the criteria to become MHFCs

Step 4: Develop Mental Wellness Ministries in participating churches

- Invite mental health providers, consumers, family members, pastoral staff and other interested parties in the congregation to join the Mental Wellness Ministry
- Identify and train committed church members to oversee program implementation and ongoing practices

+ Plan Overview

Step 5: Develop a local Resource Guide

- Guide will contain culturally responsive and accessible mental health resources

Step 6: Create a culturally focused media campaign

- Comprehensive campaign includes earned and unearned media
- Hill & Company will partner with African-American media outlets to leverage media buys to support messages/movement in the community

Step 7: Evaluate program success

- Survey participating churches to assess program effectiveness
- Offer best and promising practices and toolkits to other counties

+ Discussion/Next Steps