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CalMHSa Program Partner Spotlight

Resource Development and Promising Practices Program

Mental Health Association of San Francisco

For more than 60 years, the Mental Health Association of San Francisco (MHASF) has pioneered recovery and wellness-focused mental health services, advocacy, education, research and stigma reduction. Now, through a partnership with the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSa), MHASF is bringing together the world’s leading stigma reduction practice and research under one roof. The Center for Dignity, Recovery and Stigma Elimination (the Center) will enhance the effectiveness of community-driven stigma change programs and serve as a resource hub of best practices and emerging strategies that represent California’s cultural diversity.

The Center is just one example of the enduring impact CalMHSa’s statewide Prevention and Early Intervention projects will have in transforming mental health services and combating stigmatizing attitudes.

The Center for Dignity, Recovery and Stigma Elimination

The Center brings the best available stigma reduction knowledge and practice together to support communities or individuals who are developing and implementing programs to eradicate the stigma around mental health challenges. The Center’s support programs put a particular focus on the strength of ethnic and diverse communities to boost the success of stigma reduction programs.

The Center’s technical assistance program makes the research and resources of the world’s leading stigma experts available to agencies working to reduce stigma in their communities. The Center is led and staffed by individuals of diverse cultural backgrounds with personal lived experience of mental health challenges. The diverse staff’s expertise and experiences enables the center to develop, evaluate, and improve its research, training, and communications programs.

Cultural and ethnic communities in California and beyond view, experience, and respond to mental health concerns in very different ways. Accordingly, the Center partners with ethnic and cultural communities to study and advance community-driven indigenous practices that have promise for culturally competent stigma reduction.



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Resource Development

The Center’s Resource Development Program supports community-based, mental health stigma and discrimination reduction (SDR) programs across the state through a process of engagement, assessment, training and technical assistance. This highly collaborative program works in partnership with experts in stigma elimination, statewide consumer leaders and consumer-run organizations to provide resources and support in ways that empower SDR programs to become effective agents for stigma elimination in their own communities.

Boosting Promotoras Outreach

The Center assisted the Modesto Promotoras Program, which empowers community leaders to be peer educators who connect traditionally underserved communities with services. The Center’s resources and expertise helped Promotoras build tools and resources and enabled the program to provide consistent training and skill building to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the program.

By working actively with researchers, the Center’s expertise is combined with the community’s strengths to maximize their impact. The Center develops trainings and does one-on-one technical assistance with organizations. They then can generate resources that are available online. The technical assistance helps the organizations be able to handle hard questions, and informs them about what topics to focus on so their message does not get cloudy.

For example, staff from the Center led a collaborative program evaluation process with the Humboldt County Speakers Bureau ‘Seeds of Understanding’, which led to the identification of specific trainings to strengthen their program. The Center then created specific trainings to meet their objectives. In Riverside County, Center staff met with youth leaders, community workers, and county officials to collaborate on the creation of a transitional-age youth (TAY) Speakers Bureau for young people to share their experiences and challenges with stigma and trauma. Staff from the Center have now created a series of trainings for Riverside County on both program development and speaker training skills to prepare the launch of the new TAY Speakers Bureau.

So far, the Center has provided technical assistance to stigma reduction programs in over 28 California counties serving a wide diversity of communities culturally, linguistically, and geographically.

Programs Registry

Additionally, the Center benefits California counties and communities by providing a registry of stigma and discrimination reduction programs and promising practices within cultural, ethnic, and racially diverse communities. The California Programs Registry is a searchable online database of effective anti-stigma programs and promising practices programs for mental health-related stigma and discrimination reduction.



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The registry includes evidence-based anti-stigma programs that focus on opportunities for people with a lived experience of mental health challenges to share their stories through speakers bureaus, and promising practices programs that have a particular promise to reduce mental illness stigma within the context of specific cultural, ethnic, and racial community programs. This registry helps to network programs across the state serving similar populations and will highlight programs that are utilizing best practice strategies.

272 programs have been catalogued with specific details about the program and its implementation, interested partners to find programs that match their goals and population targets. Ultimately, organizations can connect to others to replicate programs and support program sustainability.

View the registry here: <http://dignityandrecoverycenter.org/center-registry/>.

Promising Practices Program

Research around the positive value ethnic communities bring to personal challenges about mental health has so far been limited. The Center's Promising Practices program aims to increase the body of knowledge around cultural and ethnic best practices. This community engagement program identifies culturally, ethnically and racially specific attitudes towards mental health; examines the strengths of cultural approaches, and promotes promising practices.

With a focus on knowledge transfer, the Center works together to build a knowledge base for evidence-based community-driven stigma change. The teams integrate cutting- edge instruments for evaluation, strategies and resources that community organizations can utilize to strengthen their SDR programs.

Stigma and Suicide

Among the Center's truly innovative projects are new initiatives exploring the stigma surrounding suicide, and programs to promote the unique ability of suicide attempt survivors to serve their communities as messengers of hope by challenging misconceptions and the culture of silence that so often isolates people facing suicidal thoughts and feelings. In bringing suicide

Orange County Association for Vietnamese Mental Health Awareness and Support

The Center has worked closely with Orange County to strengthen and grow this community-initiated program that started in its founders' living room. With the Center's support, the Association has created its first materials around stigma and mental health conditions in Vietnamese. Now, the organization can begin outreach activities and add additional cultural practices targeting the Vietnamese community from a community-defined perspective. The Center is also collaborating with the community itself to create fact sheets, information and outreach that was initiated in Vietnamese instead of translated.

The Center's cultural practice strengthens the program and sets the bar for a better avenue for outreach, dissemination and visibility of the program.



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prevention together with stigma change, the Center is breaking new ground and helping California lead the way to new directions for reducing the impact of mental health conditions.

The Center is changing the traditional conversation around mental health stigma with its unique ability to bring understanding from the community and knowledge and structural thinking from an academic, research approach. For more information on the Mental Health Association of San Francisco and the Center for Dignity, Recovery and Stigma Elimination's resources or programs, visit <http://www.mentalhealthsf.org/> and www.dignityandrecoverycenter.org, or contact Eduardo Vega, Executive Director, at eduardo@mentalhealthsf.org.