



Sacramento AA/Black Community Dialogue: Mental Health and Criminal “Justice” System

ONTRACK Program Resources, Inc. (ONTRACK) has contracted as a “Local Level Entity” (LLE) subcontractor with the California Black Health Network (CBHN) under the California Pan Ethnic Health Network’s (CPEHN) Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) *Diverse Stakeholder Engagement* contract. In its role as a LLE, ONTRACK is contracted to coordinate two annual events to engage the Sacramento African American/Black (AA/Black) community and develop a post-events report. The events will include robust collaborative planning, outreach and engagement with county and community partners and leaders.

ONTRACK is organizing the events to engage the Sacramento AA/Black community and representatives from the behavioral health and criminal justice systems and county/city governance in a discussion about AA/Black mental health needs. The events will focus on mental health needs as addressed (or not addressed) through local criminal “justice” systems involvement (i.e. police, sheriffs, jails, juvenile “justice,” probation, parole, courts, referred provider network, etc. (law enforcement)) agencies/systems. The first event has been slated to take place November 17 and 18, 2021, 2-5 pm, and, due to Covid-19, will be conducted virtually. The second event will take place in the fall of 2022 and hopefully will be able to take place in person (TBD).

Background

In early 2020, CPEHN originally proposed that an LLE organize an introductory general topic event with the Sacramento County AA/Black community addressing public mental health services and the MHSOAC, through its MHSOAC *Diverse Stakeholder Engagement* contract. However, Sacramento County Behavioral Health Services (BHS) has recently engaged the AA/Black community extensively through its *African American Trauma Informed Wellness Program (TIWP)*¹ and *Behavioral Health Racial Equity Collaborative (BHREC)*² development process involving numerous community listening sessions. And, it has been determined that an introductory/general topic type event would be redundant. Therefore, ONTRACK is recommending to address a topic that has been raised in these and comparable sessions with the local AA/Black community: the experience of AA/Black people with mental health needs and the local criminal “justice” system. This topic remains a top concern for the AA/Black community and ONTRACK, in its role as a trusted community partner and as a seasoned technical assistance provider, believes it can help facilitate a discussion that will be beneficial to the AA/Black community and to others concerned.

Another reason this topic has been selected is to be sure that the AA/Black community is

¹ <https://www.shfcenter.org/trauma-informed-wellness-program>

² <https://dhs.saccounty.net/BHS/Documents/BHREC/Behavioral-Health-Racial-Equity-Collaborative.pdf>



aware of and engaged in other important and relevant recent BHS developments, i.e., the Sacramento County MHA funded *Innovation Project 5 Plan: Forensic Behavioral Health Multi-System Teams*³ contract recently awarded to El Hogar; the *Wellness Crisis Call Center and Response* (formerly *Alternatives to 911 for Mental Health*)⁴, and the recent adoption of *Assisted Outpatient Treatment (Laura's Law)*.⁵

Proposed: Two-Part “Call and Response” Virtual Event

Over the last several years, the Sacramento AA/Black community has repeatedly expressed its frustration and outrage with local encounters involving behavioral health and law enforcement, in a few publicized cases resulting in the death of several Black people having mental health and/or substance use crises. The response from the AA/Black community has run the gamut from organized and spontaneous street protests, outcry at City Council and Board of Supervisor meetings, *Defund the Police*, and *Decarcerate Sacramento*, etc. And, at BHS community listening sessions, it has been consistently included as a topic of top concern. ONTRACK recognizes that the topic is sensitive, at risk of being volatile from the perspective of city and county administration. And yet it remains a topic in which engagement with the AA/Black community could use great improvement, especially given the opportunities for meaningful and collaborative input into the *Innovation Project 5 Plan: Forensic Behavioral Health Multi-System Teams* contract, *Wellness Crisis Call Center and Response* project and *Assisted Outpatient Treatment (Laura's Law)*.

ONTRACK will plan and implement this virtual event addressing the AA/Black community and mental health and law enforcement in collaboration with members of the AA/Black community and representatives from CBHN, CPEHN, BHS and provider networks, and law enforcement. The event is envisioned as taking place in two 2½ - 3 hour sessions, in the spirit of “Call and Response.” The first part of the event will center on members of the AA/Black community sharing their experiences with dealing with mental health issues across the spectrum of contacts with law enforcement and the behavioral health system (the “Call”). The gathering will be skillfully facilitated by an AA/Black licenced Marriage and Family Therapist, Dr. Tanya La Takla, with warm welcome and centering exercises, panel presentations made up of 4-5 community members, breakout groups, large group reporting out, and a closing soothing/healing ritual. It is expected that Board of Supervisors, BHS, law enforcement and other county/city/state representatives who will speak/represent at the following second session will be present (with cameras on) and listening respectfully/non-defensively to the panel presentation and large group report out. (But they will be in separate facilitated breakout groups from the community members.)

³ <https://dhs.saccounty.net/BHS/Documents/Reports--Workplans/MHSA-Reports-and-Workplans/RT-2020-MHSA-INN-Project-5-Plan--Forensic-Behavioral-Health-Multi-System-Teams.pdf>

⁴ <https://dhs.saccounty.net/BHS/Pages/Wellness-Crisis-Call-Center-and-Response.aspx>

⁵ <https://dhs.saccounty.net/BHS/Pages/Laura%27s-Law-AOT-Community-Input.aspx>



The second session will be a thoughtfully crafted session (The “Response”) beginning with facilitated acknowledgment of what was said in the first “Call” session (including summation/paraphrasing, compassion and expression of wanting to work together to address and resolve concerns, in a way that is trauma informed, validating and empowering.) This session will also include sharing information from 5-6 Board of Supervisors, Mayor’s Office, BHS and law enforcement representatives about current/future solution-oriented initiatives and how the AA/Black community can be involved in *meaningful* ways. There will be ample time for questions and answers/dialogue and next steps between this event and the follow-up event a year later (2022). We will strive to create a sense of accessibility, authentic dialogue and relatability.

The event will take place all on two consecutive days, Wednesday, 11/17 and Thursday, 11/18, at 2-5 pm. We will communicate strongly that both sessions are encouraged to be attended.

Event Follow-up

ONTRACK, in its role as LLE, is contracted to conduct a follow-up event a year after this proposed event, in 2022, that will focus on building upon the first 2021 event. We will conduct debriefing sessions with key stakeholders to inform planning for the 2022 event, including AA/Black community panelists and selected participants; county/city/state representatives, including Board of Supervisors, BHS and provider network, law enforcement, and potential private partners. We will have monthly event planning meetings for the second annual event starting in 2022 (January).





Sacramento AA/Black Community Dialogue: Mental Health and Criminal “Justice” System Timeline/Process:

November 2021 event	
What	Complete by
Ongoing planning meetings with CBHN	Nov 2020-2022
1 initial meeting with BHS, 8/16/21: Kelli Weaver, Geoff Twitchell, Mary Nakamura, and Julie Leung, to be followed up with 2-3 planning meetings	August
Select event date(s) with input from collaborators/panelists/presenters	By end of September
Set up Zoom event registration process and portal	By end of September
Key informant planning meetings with other BHS staff and provider network and law enforcement representatives/collaborators, TBD with input from Kelli Weaver and team, to document MHSA process, meeting structure and schedule, and existing resources	September-early October
Key informant planning meetings with AA/Black community & panelists, relevant community based organizations to document MHSA process, meeting structure and schedule, and existing resources	September-early October
Create marketing campaign	September-early October
Conduct research for meeting materials development and toolkit, including review of current MHSA and Cultural Competency plans	September-early October
Confirm panelists, presenters, and breakout facilitators	Early October
Publicize event with culturally responsive local media outlets, ie. KDEE 97.5, Sacramento Observer, Sac Cultural Hub; social media; and ONTRACK distribution list	Mid-October- event date (Nov)
Make announcements of project and event at BHS MHSA Steering Committee meetings, MHSA Cultural Competency Committee and Mental Health Board meetings, Board of Supervisors meeting, City Council meeting, and other county/city meetings	October- event date (Nov)

Create discussion guide for breakout facilitators	2 weeks before event
Conduct training for breakout facilitators in community listening approach	1 week before event
Have preparation meeting(s)/walk-through(s) with panelists, presenters, and breakout facilitators that includes logistics and how to's to achieve spirit/intention of gathering	1-5 days before meeting
2-Part Event, in early November TBD, to be determined with input by collaborators.	TBD
Debrief with presenters and key participants	1-5 days after event
Attend LMHB, MHSA/PPP, and Cultural Competency Meetings with technical assistance to prepare talking points and debrief after to determine level of influence and effectiveness	
Develop post event report and disseminate to entire contact list with brief guide for how to use the report	30 days after event
2022 event (in October or November)	
Repeat process for 2021 event	January 2022-event (date TBD)