

Stipend Project Write Up: African American/Black Consumer Focus Group

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On April 11, 2016, I conducted two focus groups (one morning and one evening segment) on behalf of the African American Community Initiative (AACI) of San Mateo County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS). The purpose of this focus group was to gather information directly from African American/Black consumers/clients of BHRS. The information of interest to the AACI was to find out how African Americans feel about and perceive: access to care, welcoming at our clinics and service points of entry, information provided and its relevance, treatment options and opportunities, experiential perceptions regarding Cultural Humility, and lastly, thoughts about what could be done better to improve their treatment experiences and outcomes.

The participants of this focus group were recruited via distribution of a flyer and direct phone calls to current African American clients of North County Mental Health (NCMH), emails to clinicians, and flyer postings around the NCMH clinic. There was food and beverage provided at the event, as well as a stipend of twenty-five dollars for participation. The nine questions, which were developed by the 2015 AACI members for last year's focus group, were used again for this focus group, and asked to all of the participants. The 9 questions were answered by a total of 6 participants; 4 were present at the focus groups, and two responded to the questions by phone.

The results of this project were mostly positive, and they revealed that African American/Black consumers/clients of NCMH are satisfied with the quality of service they receive from providers, as well as have a positive perception of the way providers at NCMH handle cultural humility. Specifically, participants noted how culturally competent providers were at NCMH, as well as how supportive, helpful, and collaboratively providers work with them. Recommendations for BHRS that arose from this focus group are to: increase the diversity of available clinicians, develop more culturally specific activities/groups/events at and outside the clinic, to more closely monitor the behavior and hygiene issues of adult clients (both in waiting rooms and restrooms) and lastly, to reevaluate the location of the

smoking area, as it relates to the health concerns of some clients. The results of this project will be presented to the members of AACI, at their monthly meeting in May 2016, as well as the Youth Team at NCMH, at their weekly meeting in May 2016, in the form of a PowerPoint presentation and question and answer session.