

SAN MATEO COUNTY HEALTH SYSTEM  
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND RECOVERY SERVICES

DATE: January 12, 2006

BHRS POLICY: 06-02

SUBJECT: Consumer/Client and Family Member Stipends for Services to Behavioral Health and Recovery Services

AUTHORITY: W&I Code 5600.2; County of San Mateo

AMENDED: April 11, 2011; Technical edits to attachments April 12, 2017;  
Attachment B obsoleted and replaced April 12, 2017

ATTACHMENTS: Attachment A: Consumer/Family Stipend Form (English)  
Attachment B: Consumer/Family Stipend Form (Spanish)

BACKGROUND:

San Mateo County Behavioral Health Services (BHRS) is committed to the fullest possible involvement of consumers/clients and family members in planning, developing, providing and evaluating services for clients of all ages. The first value in our Mission Statement is:

- Partnership with clients and their families to promote recovery while respecting strengths and choices.

California Welfare and Institutions Code states, “All services and programs for persons with mental disabilities should be client centered, in recognition of varying individual goals, diverse needs, concerns, strengths, motivations and disabilities.”

An elemental concept in the Mental Health Services Act is that counties develop a “..Consumer and family-driven system (in which) consumers *identify their needs and preferences which lead to* the programs and providers that will help them most. Their needs and preferences drive the policy and financing decisions that affect them.”

PURPOSE:

This policy is intended to describe a mechanism to promote and fairly compensate participation of consumers/clients and family members in key Behavioral Health activities including committees, consultations, and focus groups, and services such as participating on program

review and hiring panels. This process must be culturally competent and insure that monolingual consumers/family members and consumers with disabilities have opportunities to contribute.

Nothing in this policy is meant to alter any other behavioral health or countywide policy or procedure for obtaining services through employment, purchase order, or Request for Proposal (RFP) for more substantial contracts.

## POLICY:

- A. The Office of Consumer and Family Affairs (OCFA) has the identified responsibility to develop a roster of willing consumers/family members who have agreed to participate with Behavioral Health Services in program improvement efforts, on a one-time or ongoing basis. Stipends may be available for consumers who provide such services.
- a. Special training shall be offered by OCFA for specialized functions such as participating on hiring boards and leading focus groups.
  - b. The office may also develop generalized training for potential participants concerning the expected role of the consumer/family member in relationship to specific assignments, issues of confidentiality, etc.
  - c. Participants in training will be given stipends commensurate with the time they spent in training.
  - d. Mentoring, partnering and other mechanisms to support consumer/client or family participation will be developed and utilized to increase the diversity of involvement by consumers/clients and family members. .
  - e. Other parts of the county Behavioral Health System will consult with OCFA around needs for consumer/family participation, and the appropriate stipend, if any, to offer.
- B. Identifying Services/Functions Eligible for Stipends
- a. The Office of Consumer and Family Affairs and/or a Behavioral Health Supervisor or Manager (working with OCFA) shall identify, prior to asking for participation, that the service will require *a significant and/or ongoing time commitment* by identified consumer(s)/family member(s). Decisions about stipends, if any, will be made prior to any request for participation.
  - b. Certain ongoing committees have significant and ongoing needs for consumer/family member participation and can offer stipends on a continuous basis. These include, but are not limited to:
    - i. Quality Improvement Committee
    - ii. Evidence Based Practices Committee(s)
    - iii. Consumer/Client and family member dedicated positions on pilot program steering committees
    - iv. Hiring panels for leadership positions.
    - v. Cultural Competence Committee
  - c. The Office will manage the administration of all stipends and maintain records sufficient to identify the function, consumer(s), and stipend awarded.

- d. No stipend will be available if a consumer/client or family member participates in an activity and their participation is considered part of paid work time, either through BHRS or another employer.
- e. Under certain circumstances, consumers/clients or family members who provide ongoing services may receive stipends in cash through a contract managed by a contracted entity.

C. Principles for Awarding Stipends

- a. No payments in cash for services may be made by County staff.
- b. Where possible, arrangements will be made for cash stipends for consumers/clients and family members on ongoing committees or providing services, payable through a contracted intermediary.
- c. Generally, a purchase voucher from basic-needs stores (such as a grocery store) is the preferred method to recognize a one time only or infrequent consumer/family service.
- d. For youth, movie vouchers and other age appropriate vouchers can be considered.
- e. The value of the voucher(s) will depend on the time spent in providing the function by the consumer/client or family member.
- f. A minimum voucher value will be established in order to support critical participation in ongoing but brief committees/consultations. In certain situations, mileage expenses may be considered when determining the appropriate stipend value.
- g. In pre-determined situations, such as one-time focus groups, while participation per se is not awarded a stipend, gift certificates may be appropriate to offset out of pocket costs for childcare.
- h. Payments are made for in-person participation. On rare occasions, and by prior arrangement, participation via conference call may be reimbursed. This would generally be for situations where the individual regularly attends in person but is unable to do so at a given time.
- i. When several family members participate in a particular function, one stipend per family is awarded.

D. Cash reimbursement by Contractors

In situations where behavioral health contractors agree to pay for certain services in cash, a rate in the range of that paid by Vocational Rehabilitation Services for its employed Peer Counselors shall be utilized. A minimum standard payment shall be equivalent to two hours of service.

E. Principles for Selecting Consumers/Clients or Family Members

- a. Every effort will be made to involve the greatest possible number of culturally diverse consumers/clients and family members.
- b. No consumer/client or family member shall be the appointed member on more than two leadership committees at the same time without specific approval by a Deputy Director.

F. Exclusions

Attendance at a public meeting designed to offer opportunities for general input or for attendees to gain general knowledge will not qualify for a stipend.

Example – attendance at a Mental Health and Substance Abuse Recovery Commission meeting or program, or at a large community forum concerning the Mental Health Services Act.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ *(Signature on file)*  
Louise Rogers, MPA  
BHRS Director