



Policy:	06-02
Subject:	Stipends for Individuals with Lived Experience and Family Members for Services Provided to San Mateo County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services
Authority:	W&I Code 5600.2; County of San Mateo
Original Policy Date:	January 12, 2006
Amended:	Amended: April 11, 2011, September 30, 2020, July 3, 2024 (Amended & Renamed) Attachments A: Technical edits April 12, 2017; Attachment B: Obsoleted April 12, 2017
Supersedes:	N/A
Attachments:	Attachment A: Consumer/Family Stipend Form (English, Spanish)

PURPOSE

This policy is intended to describe a mechanism to promote and compensate the active and engaged participation and expertise of individuals with lived experience and family members in key behavioral health activities including, but not limited to, Health Equity Initiatives, planning committees, consultations, focus groups, work groups, and services such as participating on program review and hiring panels. To be considered as participating, individuals must contribute their thoughts and opinions to help further the goals of the workgroup or activity. Active engagement and sharing of ideas that contribute to the progress and success of the workgroup or activity are essential components of participation. This process must be culturally responsive and ensure that individuals with lived experience and/or with Limited English Proficiency 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.

BACKGROUND

San Mateo County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) is committed to the fullest possible involvement with individuals with lived experience and family members in planning, developing, providing, and evaluating services for behavioral health clients of all ages. BHRS values:

- Partnership with clients and their families to support culturally responsive, trauma informed and person and family-centered recovery, while respecting individual



strengths and choices. Individuals with lived experience and family members have played a vital role in informing and developing our services and system of care. This is a valued asset that permeates our decision-making, accountability measures, and assuring the voices of those we serve, and their families, are heard.

- 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 (MHSA) 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.*”

DEFINITIONS

Lived Experience: “Lived Experience” is the personal experience of living with and recovering from a behavioral health challenge or being a close relative or caretaker of someone with personal experience. Behavioral health challenges include mental health and substance use disorders.

POLICY

- A. The BHRS Office of Consumer and Family Affairs (OCFA) and the Office of Diversity & Equity (ODE) have the identified responsibility to develop a roster of willing individuals with lived experience who have agreed to actively participate with BHRS in program improvement efforts, providing community input and participation in activities on a one-time or ongoing basis. Stipends will be made available for individuals with lived experience who provide such services with prior approval from OCFA or ODE.
 - a. BHRS may develop trainings for potential participants concerning the expected role of individuals with lived experience in relationship to specific needs or requests.
 - b. BHRS will make efforts to encourage the involvement of diverse individuals with lived experience and maintain consumer and family member voices and expertise within our system, programs, and activities.
 - c. Other parts of the county BHRS system will consult with OCFA and/or ODE around the need for individuals with lived experience to participate in activities, and the appropriate stipend, if any, to offer.



B. Identifying Services/Functions Eligible for Stipends

- a. All stipend requests must be made to OCFA and/or ODE (and be approved for a qualified event) at least 2 weeks prior to individuals with lived experience participation in any service or function. OCFA and ODE will maintain a BHRS OCFA/ODE Internal Procedural Stipend Guide defining the specific requirements and procedures to request and approve stipends.
- b. Certain ongoing committees have significant and ongoing needs for individuals with lived experience participation and can offer stipends on a continuous basis with appropriate approvals. These include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Quality Improvement Committee or workgroup
 - ii. MHSA Steering Committee
 - iii. Pilot Programs, steering committees, or meetings that require representation from individual(s) with lived experience
 - iv. Hiring panels for leadership positions.
 - v. Health Equity Initiatives (stipends limited to 2 initiative meetings per month)
 - vi. Speaking engagements
 - vii. Focus groups
 - viii. Special participation in events and projects such as RFP reviews.
- c. OCFA and/or ODE will manage the administration of all stipends and maintain records sufficient to identify the participation in a service or function of individuals with lived experience and stipend awarded.
- d. No stipend will be available if individuals with lived experience participate in an activity and their participation is considered part of paid work time, either through BHRS or another employer.
- e. No stipend will be available if an individual with lived experience is being compensated (e.g.: stipend, gift cards, etc.) from BHRS, another organization or department for work performed.
- f. Individuals with lived experience that provide ongoing services may receive stipend checks through a contract managed by a contracted entity.
- g. Individuals can only be compensated once for their work. If funded through a contract no stipend can be provided.

C. Principles for Awarding Stipends

- a. No payments in cash for services may be made by County staff.
- b. Generally, a purchase voucher(s) or gift card(s) from basic-needs stores (such as a grocery store) is the preferred method to recognize a one-time only or



infrequent service by individuals with lived experience.

- c. For youth, age-appropriate voucher(s) or gift card(s) can be considered.
- d. The value of the voucher(s) or gift card(s) will correspond to the time spent completing the project or participating in the workgroup.
- e. Stipend amounts are paid in 2-hour intervals
- f. For the precise stipend amount and the criteria for participation, please refer to the BHRS OCFA/ODE Procedural Stipend Guide.
- g. Stipends will be made available for in-person participation and virtual participation via video or phone conference.

D. OCFA and ODE will maintain a BHRS OCFA/ODE Internal Procedural Stipend Guide for providers and individuals with Lived Experience. This guide is updated regularly and can be requested as needed.

E. Principles for Selecting Individuals with Lived Experience

- a. Every effort will be made to involve the greatest possible number of diverse and/or Limited English proficient individuals with lived experience.
- b. Stipends will be provided for participation in maximum of four (4) activities (e.g. HEI meetings, focus groups, workgroups, committees, etc.) per month.
- c. OCFA Director or ODE Director may approve participation in additional committees on limited time bases. (Participants may be approved for additional stipends in a case-by-case manner via OCFA/ODE)

F. Exclusions

- a. Attendance at public meetings designed to offer opportunities for general community input or for attendees to gain general knowledge do not qualify for a stipend. OCFA or ODE may approve specific exceptions on a temporary basis. Example – attendance at Behavioral Health Commission Meetings, Behavioral Health Commission Subcommittee Meetings, BHRS community forums etc.

Approved: Signature on File
Dr. Jei Africa, PsyD, FACHE
BHRS Director