

Central Region: Mental Health Town Hall Summary
Jacobs Center, Southeastern San Diego
May 10, 2018 from 5-7 pm

Introduction

On Thursday, May 10th, 2018, a Mental Health Town Hall Meeting was convened by the Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Services and the Probation Department on behalf of the County of San Diego.

| County Executives in Attendance | Providers in Attendance | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew Strong, CAO Chief of Staff; • Dale Fleming, Director Office of Strategy and Innovation, HHSA; • <i>*Barbara Jimenez</i>, Director of Central & South Regions; • <i>*Alfredo Aguirre</i>, Director Behavioral Health Services; • <i>*Rueben Littlejohn</i>, Assistant Chief Probation Officer; • Mark Sellers, Assistant Director Aging and Independent Services; • Susan Bower, Director of Integrative Services; • Dr. Elizabeth Hernandez and • Dr. Sayone Thihalolipavan, Public Health Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Kids Academy Head Start • Alliance African Assistance • Alpha Project • American Heart Association • Behavioral Health Services • Child Welfare Services • Cultural Broker Program • Episcopal Community Services • Family Health Center of San Diego • First 5 • Fisher Mental Health Consulting • Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation • Jane Westin Center • Harmonium, Inc. • Harmonious Solutions • Inner City Athletic • IMPACT • I Am My Brother's Keeper | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health Systems Inc. • Mental Health America • National Alliance on Mental Illness • National Conflict Resolution Center • Neighborhood House Association • Nile Sisters • Pathways • Paradise Valley Hospital • San Diego American Indian Health Center • San Diego Unified School District • San Ysidro Health Center • Survivor of Torture International • UPAC • Vista Hill • YMCA |
| <p><i>*Panel Members</i></p> | | |

Community participants included residents, business owners and service providers in Southeastern San Diego. The purpose was to engage community members by initiating a conversation about mental health in Southeastern San Diego, provide an opportunity to connect the community to County services, and to receive feedback from the community.

Methodology

Recruitment of community participants included promoting the event via email, social media platforms, and the livewellsd.org website. Flyers were distributed throughout Southeastern San Diego at local libraries, employment centers, senior centers, shopping centers, and other public locations. Translation services, child care, and food were available for participants, in addition to

resource tables which featured local providers, County services, and a Southeastern Live Well Center info table. A total of 191 participants attended the Town Hall.

Participants in this Town Hall were members of or stakeholders in the Southeastern San Diego community.

An introduction and background of *Live Well San Diego* was provided by Andrew Strong and Dale Fleming, who briefed participants on the goals and vision of the County and its commitment to the Southeastern community. Dr. John Warren, publisher of the newspaper *San Diego Voice and Viewpoint*, moderated the discussion and facilitated questions from participants addressed to County executives. Dr. Warren provided an overview of Live Well Communities and its goal to address disparities, disproportionalities, and inequities in Southeastern San Diego.

Results

The Jacobs Center is a venue which the community considers a familiar and therefore safe place to share opinions. Hosting the Town Hall at the Jacobs Center created an environment conducive to honest discussion. Following the introduction to *Live Well San Diego* and Live Well Communities, participants were encouraged to talk about the services needed in the community, share ideas of what services they would like to see available in the community, talk about service gaps and voice their experiences with County mental health services.

Participants were informed of the County plan to build a new Live Well Center in Southeastern San Diego, and how feedback from the Town Hall would be incorporated in the implementation of services provided there.

The overall tone of the community was direct, transparent and at times emotionally charged as participants shared personal stories and lived experiences. The majority of questions and concerns from community participants included these (Table 1):

- Early prevention and intervention
- A perceived lack of communication about County services, efforts, and projects/initiatives
- Re-establishing trust
- Whether the Southeastern Live Well Center will meet the needs of the community

County executives addressed all questions and provided participants with clarification on the role and priorities of the County.

Table 1: Voices of the Community

| Topic | What we heard from Community (direct quotes): |
|--|---|
| Early Prevention & Intervention (PEI) | <p>“Is there also an opportunity to have PEI service, so we can focus on strengths, versus just things that have a negative connotation to them?”</p> <p>“Let’s put strategies together around families to work together. Church, parents, paraprofessionals, early interventions.”</p> |
| Lack of Communication | <p>“We need to look at the model of how it’s working, is it? Let’s be specific, nobody knows what’s going on? We got to show improvements, create an action plan, and follow it.”</p> <p>“Where did those services go that were at Harmonious Solutions (Mental Health Provider)? My question is, where do I go?”</p> <p>“San Diego is the capital of refugees here in the state of California. You will not find services for refugees, why? Refugees in your county feel unwelcomed, why?”</p> <p>“My mental health brother has been a challenge to our family ever since elementary school, when I reach out to the County of San Diego for help, I get nothing.”</p> <p><u>DATA</u></p> <p>“African communities need to be recognized, especially on paper. We need to put in more effort to serve the African community and make sure data represents all African groups.”</p> |
| Trust | <p>“Let’s move beyond partnerships and talk about relationships. It’s about trust.”</p> <p>“The same issues have been going on for decades. How can we truly trust you and develop a real relationship?”</p> <p>“There’s a lot of mistrust, but when are we going to get connected? Are you all just moving people around? Please, let us take something back to the community we serve, some hope. Because right now, I don’t know where it’s at.”</p> <p>“It’s a color thing- relocated and separated, shutting down the black programs. We need to have people of all nationalities working to provide help.”</p> |
| Southeastern Live Well Center | <p>“With an 80,000 square foot building, what about the impact to the community? What is your intent when it comes to the Market Plaza and can you expand on it?”</p> <p>“Why not expand services and build upon what already exists, the Jacobs Center? This place was designed for all cultures to meet and collaborate.”</p> |

Conclusion

The intent of the Town Hall Meeting was to engage the Southeastern San Diego community in a discussion about mental health. With the recent announcement of a new Live Well Center to break ground soon, the opportunity to gather direct feedback was of utmost importance to tailor County services to fit the needs and priorities identified by the community. Systemic challenges, including lack of communication, distrust, and a perception of limited services, was the main theme that emerged from the Town Hall dialogue.

Accordingly, County executives addressed each question from participants and gained valuable insight to rebuild trust with the community, tailor communication, and incorporate feedback into the planning and development of the Live Well Center, specifically for mental health services. While there are further action steps needed to fully address community concerns, the Mental Health Town Hall identified specific gaps which will guide the future communication and delivery of mental health and other County services to the diverse ethnic and socio-economic groups which comprises the Southeastern San Diego community.