

Behavioral Health Subcommittee May 26, 2022
Meeting Notes

Attendees:

Alexa Johnson (Chair)
Alyson Robbins
Heather Rye
Nat Dodd
Mark Creekmore
Alex Roth (Vera)
Angie Carpio (Vera)

- Welcome all members and announce and thank Alexa for stepping into the chair role. We are still looking for co-chair, so people should let Vera know if they would consider doing this.
 - Alexa says a little about her background and thanks everyone for being at the meeting
- Minutes – don't have quorum yet but those in the meeting can vote and then we can get others to vote by email
 - March minutes – approved unanimously
 - April minutes – approved unanimously
- Discussion of research questions, plan, and activities
 - Vera staff member shares document which includes research questions, and proposed research activities and explains what's included; many of the activities for specific research questions are the same, so won't be doing separate surveys or focus groups for each one
 - Chair goes through document to look at the questions and what the proposed activities are for each
 - Discuss whether group should brainstorm about which service providers should be surveyed. Decide to do ask people by follow-up email to provide suggestions
 - Question about how much we should look at intersectionality – should we also look specifically at BIPOC LGBTQ people – will try to do this as much as possible if we can get this data and/or through focus groups
 - Have we connected with Center for Health Transformation – they did something similar. CMH also did series of focus groups in 2018 – done by a consulting group and should be publicly available. Also, St. Joe's and UMich hospitals do some sort of survey every couple of years?
 - Question about whether RQ about required qualifications for provider staff is too broad – should ask about this by different positions in survey
 - Question about whether we will also be looking at intellectual and developmental disabilities – discuss how we might get some of this information through surveys/focus groups but probably would not be a real focus for the subcommittee

- Member states it is really important to look at peer staff and the required qualifications, pay, retention, barriers to hiring peer staff etc., so not just looking at degreed staff. Group agrees that we should ask specific questions about this in surveys and interviews.
- Members suggests we also talk to people who have left their positions to get their perspective. Group agrees that we will try to do interviews with both current and former staff. Members will identify people who have left providers, especially BIPOC people.
- Question about what questions we would ask to get information for the question about how to increase recruitment and retention of staff of color. Vera staff member explains we can ask about general policies and numbers for survey of providers and then get more specific feedback from interviews.
- Member suggests when looking at qualifications we also look at how much providers value/credit lived experience. For example, are there people who have 10 years of practical experience but can't get jobs because don't have MA.
- Member suggests that for harm reduction questions, we be very specific about what we mean by harm reduction because different people/orgs can have very different ideas about what they mean (e.g., do people think this just means providing Naloxone or providing syringes but still pushing people for abstinence or actually meeting people where they're at and providing whatever services they need to reduce risks.
- Member says in this context we should also look people who don't comply with treatment plans/programs and what are the criteria for when people get terminated from services/programs.
- Member states that Peace House and Unified both do sexual harm reduction, should make sure we talk to them about this. Peace House also does a lot of substance use harm reduction.
- Member says there are a lot of programs that don't use harm reduction approaches at all – e.g. specialty courts, alternative treatment orders, civil commitments, which all try to coerce people into compliance/abstinence but are still considered valid treatment programs.
- Question about whether this subcommittee should be looking into abstinence only programs. Vera staff member explains Court Process subcommittee will be looking at specialty courts and we could coordinate with them. Members think that we should probably still look at abstinence-only programs, criteria for specialty court eligibility.
- Member talks about how a lot of the service programs, particularly specialty courts, are extremely paternalistic and coercive.
- Member says they think there should be an appeals process for people who get terminated from programs like specialty courts.
- Question about whether we need any more specific RQ's about housing first programs. Member suggests that we ask about criteria for evictions, what supports are provided to people. Another member discusses how one of the big issues with housing programs is landlord discrimination – hard to get people housed when landlords won't accept them. There are ordinances (in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti) prohibiting this sort of discrimination but don't work. Should talk to groups like Washtenaw Housing Alliance, HAWC. Also, should look at supportive housing programs like from Avalon.

- Discussion of next steps
 - Vera will work on surveys, etc. Hoping to be able to do surveys, focus groups in late June and July. People will be compensated for participation. Vera is preparing flier and screening questionnaire to find participants.
 - Question about whether people should be sending Vera agencies and contact people for survey and ideas for people to interview. Vera staff member asks whether we should do another survey or do it by email. Members say that email asking for this information would probably be better.
 - Question about whether names will be included for people from surveys/focus groups. Vera staff members explains that we will not include people's names in any materials we produce.
- Meeting adjourned