

TRI-CITY MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT TRI-CITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER, THE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT, AND THE COMMUNITY SERVICES AND SUPPORTS PLAN

What is the Tri-City Mental Health System?

The Tri-City mental health system is the system of mental health services and supports available to residents of Claremont, La Verne, and Pomona. The system is managed by the Tri-City Mental Health Center, and includes the Tri-City mental health clinic and many other community providers.

I thought Tri-City went out of business. What happened?

Tri-City Mental Health Center (Tri-City MHC) declared bankruptcy in February 2004, but never went out of business. Staff and services were dramatically reduced during the bankruptcy: the budget decreased from over \$20 million to less than \$5 million, and staff numbers declined from 300 to less than 50. For the next several years, Tri-City MHC operated one clinic and provided services to a substantially smaller group of people. In 2007, Tri-City MHC finalized a plan to come out of bankruptcy. The plan was approved by the bankruptcy court, creditors, the three cities, the State of California, and Los Angeles County.

Why do we need Tri-City MHC? Why don't we just rely on the County Mental Health Department?

In 1960 the cities of Claremont, La Verne, and Pomona created a Joint Powers Authority called Tri-City Mental Health Center to deliver mental health services to residents of the three cities. City officials were convinced that residents would get more and better services if the system was local. Two years ago officials from the three cities and the governing board asked exactly this question: do we need Tri-City MHC? The answer they came to was the same as it was almost 50 years ago: if we can do this right, people with mental health needs in our three cities will be better served than if we rely on a County Department trying to serve hundreds of thousands of people.

Moreover, the need for mental health services and supports has never been greater. Conservative estimates place the number of residents in the three cities suffering from the most serious and persistent mental illnesses at just under 15,000, with almost half of these residents living in poverty. Thousands more struggle with less serious but profoundly affecting mental health issues, and these numbers are undoubtedly increasing as families cope with the loss of jobs and their homes, veterans return from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and other debilitating events impact our families and communities. *This is why we need people to get involved, so we can all lend a hand to help our friends and neighbors get the support they need to heal and lead productive lives.*

How can we trust that Tri-City MHC won't go bankrupt again?

Tri-City has a new governing board of directors, a new Mental Health Commission, and new senior management. The Board now includes both elected officials and community representatives with expertise in mental health issues. Commission members have expertise in wide array of mental health issues as well. New executive staff and Board members have put in place stringent fiscal and management controls to protect the organization and communities; these controls were essential for the bankruptcy court and others to approve the bankruptcy plan.

Just as important, members of the Governing Board, Commission, and staff have made an earnest commitment to transparency and collaboration as they work to restore the credibility and capacity of Tri-City MHC. One of the first signs of this transparency and collaboration was an expansive stakeholder process during 2007, while the bankruptcy plan was being finalized. Tri-City MHC sponsored this process to create shared agreement about the role of Tri-City MHC, and about changes to insure its future viability. More than 40 people, representing key stakeholders across the three cities, participated in the intensive 5-month process. The Governing Board unanimously adopted the consensus recommendations that emerged from the community stakeholders. These recommendations led directly to the hiring of a new Executive Director and other staff members, and to the creation of the new Board and Commission, among other changes.

Ok, I understand about Tri-City MHC. What is the Mental Health Services Act?

In November 2004 California voters passed Proposition 63, the Mental Health Services Act. The Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) gives money to counties to help people and families who have mental health needs.

How do people in the three cities get access to these funds?

To access these funds, Tri-City MHC must develop 5 different substantive plans. The first plan is called the Community Services and Supports (CSS) plan. This is the plan we are finishing now.

How many people have participated in the planning process for the CSS Plan?

Well over a thousand. Since November 2008, we have been conducting outreach and engagement sessions with organizations and individuals across the three cities. The purpose of these sessions has been to inform people about the CSS plan and the planning process, and to get their feedback about needs in their communities. Beginning in December 2008, a group of 48 delegates began meeting in to develop the draft plan. These delegates represented dozens of constituencies across the three cities, including people who receive services and their family members, as well as representatives of traditionally underserved groups, community providers, law enforcement, the school systems, the three city governments, and many others. The draft plan represents the consensus recommendations that have come from this group.

How much money will come to the three cities if this plan is approved?

- ❖ About \$2.4 million in services in FY 2009-10, and just under **\$4 million per year** in new services for FY 2010-11 and FY 2011-12.
- ❖ About **\$4.8 million in one-time investments** to strengthen the mental health system, including a new wellness and recovery center, software to facilitate timely referrals to services, planning funds, and other investments; and
- ❖ About **\$2.2 million in one-time funds** invested in reserve accounts to help with annual funding fluctuations.

What about the budget troubles in Sacramento? Will the money end after June 2012?

We are confident that funding for these services will continue well into the future. The Mental Health Services Act was created by initiative (Proposition 63), and can be ended only by initiative. Services are funded through a 1% surcharge on incomes over one million dollars, however, which means that it will fluctuate with the health of the economy. All of us know that the state, national, and global economies are under enormous stress, leading to drastic budget shortfalls at all levels of government. We have therefore been very conservative in our planning, using the most prudent estimates available to us from the state to make our budget projections.

How many people will get services from the CSS plan over the next 3 years? Who will actually benefit?

The Community Services and Supports Plan is intended to provide services to people in our communities who are most severely challenged by mental health issues, including adults and older adults with severe and persistent mental illnesses, and children and youth suffering from severe emotional disturbances. Hundreds of people will receive intensive mental health services (called Full Service Partnerships), and several thousand people will receive less intensive services, including supports linked through community navigators, supports through a new wellness and recovery center, and new services for older adults and people in crisis.

How can I find out more or get involved?

- ❖ Go online at www.tricitymhs.org for a copy of the draft CSS plan. You can leave comments there about the plan. You can also get a copy of the plan at one of the city libraries, and fax or mail comments to us.
- ❖ Come to the public hearing learn more and share your feedback. The hearing will take place on Thursday, April 16, 2009 from 6:30–9:00 p.m. at Palomares Park Community Center, 499 E. Arrow Hwy, Pomona, CA. Spanish and Vietnamese translation will be available at the meeting.