



MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION
MARCH 8, 2022 – 3:30 P.M.

The Mental Health Commission met in a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, March 8, 2022 at 3:33 p.m. via teleconference pursuant to Government Code § 54953, which allows the continuation to hold meetings without gathering in a room in an effort to minimize the spread and mitigate the effects of COVID-19 (Corona Virus Disease of 2019).

CALL TO ORDER Chair Henderson called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m.

ROLL CALL Roll call was taken by JPA Administrator/Clerk Olmos.

PRESENT: Anne Henderson, Chair
Wray Ryback, Vice-Chair
Carolyn Cockrell, GB Member Liaison
Twila L. Stephens
Nichole Perry
Joan M. Reyes
Alfonso "Al" Villanueva (joined the meeting at 3:39 p.m.)
Toni L. Watson

ABSENT: Clarence D. Cernal
Isabella A. Chavez
David J. Weldon (Approved Leave of Absence from 1/2022 – 04/2022)

STAFF: Jesse H. Duff, Interim Executive Director
Elizabeth (Liz) Renteria, Chief Clinical Officer
Rimmi Hundal, Director of MHSA and Ethnic Services
Ken Riomales, Chief Information Officer
Mica Olmos, JPA Administrator/Clerk

REGULAR BUSINESS

I. APPROVAL TO IMPLEMENT TELECONFERENCING REQUIREMENTS DURING A PROCLAIMED STATE OF EMERGENCY UNDER AB 361 (GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54953)

Commissioner Reyes moved, and Governing Board Liaison Cockrell seconded, to ask the interim executive director, or designee, to perform all actions necessary to implement the Brown Act provisions regarding teleconferencing in compliance with Government Code § 54953.

Chair Henderson opened the meeting for public comment; and there was no public comment.

There being no comment, the motion was carried by the following vote: AYES: Board Member Liaison Cockrell; Commissioners Perry, Reyes, Stephens, and Watson; Vice-Chair Ryback; and Chair Henderson. NOES: None. ABSTAIN: None. ABSENT: Commissioners Cernal, Chavez, Villanueva, and Weldon.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE FEBRUARY 8, 2022 MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

Commissioner Reyes moved, and Vice-Chair Ryback seconded, to approve the Minutes of the February 8, 2022 Regular Meeting of the Mental Health Commission.

Chair Henderson opened the meeting for public comment; and there was no public comment.

There being no comment, the motion was carried by the following vote: AYES: Board Member Liaison Cockrell; Commissioners Perry, Reyes, and Stephens; Vice-Chair Ryback; and Chair Henderson. NOES: None. ABSTAIN: Commissioner Watson. ABSENT: Commissioners Cernal, Chavez, Villanueva, and Weldon.

At 3:39 p.m., Commissioner Al Villanueva joined the meeting.

III. PRESENTATION

A. GREEN RIBBON WEEK ACTIVITIES

Brittany Nguyen, Tri-City's Community Capacity Organizer, talked about Green Ribbon Week (GRW), stating that it was created in 2014 to help people have everyday conversations about mental health and the stigma surrounding it; that stigma is one of the main reasons for people not asking for help or for not knowing where to access support; that this year GRW's theme is #TalkToHeal because we believe that if we can have healthy discussions around mental health, we can end the mental health stigma together; and that GRW will take place from March 14th – 18th. She then encouraged everyone to use hashtags to promote mental health on Tri-City's social media platforms; and discussed the ways to engage and promote GRW activities such as following TCMHA on social media, fun daily challenges where giveaways include gift cards to local businesses, displaying GRW promotional materials, using a virtual tool kit, and by starting a conversation and checking in with your family and friends about their mental health.

Commissioner Watson sought clarification regarding which social media platforms would be used to promote GRW.

Community Capacity Organizer Nguyen replied that staff will be using all of TCMHA's social media platforms; however, a lot of the daily challenges will be held on Instagram. She then talked about the events happening during GRW, which will taking place virtually via Zoom, such a one-on-one webinar for folks who want to learn more about what is mental health illness and how stigma impacts us; a 'let's talk about stigma' in collaboration with Justice-4-Youth, a nonprofit organization that focuses on mentoring youth into becoming better leaders and our communities; "Lights Camera Action", a film screening and a discussion where folks can join to watch and learn how media can reduce stigma and discrimination related to mental illness and promote mental health; and 'Courageous Minds', Tri-City's speakers bureau event where speakers will share their mental health experience and journey. She noted that in addition to these events, there are amazing resources accessible in Tri-City's website, such as virtual tools, the GRW activities

schedule, the social media campaign, the workshops, posters, and Zoom backgrounds which will be translated into Spanish Language; and pledge cards that can be printed and signed, and promoted taking a selfie to tag Tri-City on social media to be featured, or the opportunity to also partake in Tri-City's virtual pledge drive.

Commissioner Reyes stated that since staff was targeting the youth, she inquired if information had been distributed to the high schools. Community Capacity Organizer Nguyen replied in the affirmative, noting that she had already delivered GRW materials for Claremont, La Verne, and Pomona schools. Commissioner Reyes further inquired if GRW was only a Tri-City event or if all mental health associations were participating. Community Capacity Organizer Nguyen indicated that GRW is an initiative by Tri-City Mental Health Authority that is promoted in the communities of Pomona, La Verne, and Claremont.

Chair Henderson opened the meeting for public comment; there was no public comment.

Agenda Item No. IV was taken out of order.

IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Interim Executive Director Duff provided an update on the executive director recruitment, and stated that Wend Brown Creative Partners, search firm in charge of the recruitment, had reported that all of the preliminary steps have been achieved which included conducting interviews with the AdHoc Committee of both the Governing Board and the Mental Health Commission, all the rest of the Governing Board, with the Executive Team, other key staff members; that the recruitment officially kicked off on February 24th and closes Thursday, March 24th; that it is anticipated that the final candidate interviews will be conducted by the Governing Board in May 3rd; that after contract negotiations and notice required to their former employer, it is expected to have an executive director on board hopefully the first week of June or sooner; that it is early in the process however 25 applicants have applied and we are well underway. He then talked about COVID-19 situation, noting that although the Los Angeles County has amended their masking requirements, CalOSHA has indicated that certain industries, such as healthcare agencies, will be required to continue with their masking requirements; that Tri-City as a healthcare agency will continue with its masking requirement policy in place.

Commissioner Villanueva inquired how many of the applicants have applied that either has worked or is presently working with our agency. Interim Executive Director Duff replied that one current staff member, and one former staff member, have applied.

Discussion ensued regarding how the applicant interviews will be conducted.

Commissioner Villanueva commented that he would like to see a new executive director that has a wealth of experience working directly in providing delivery services and that also can relate from a culturally competent level to be able to serve Tri-City clients.

Interim Executive Director Duff stated that he appreciate these comments which are very valid; and indicated that the Governing Board is also sensitive to those issues and that this will be on their mind when they are conducting the interviews.

The meeting continued with the Agenda Item No. III.B

III. PRESENTATION

B. TRI-CITY MENTAL HEALTH AUTHORITY SERVICES ADJUSTMENT DURING STAFFING SHORTAGES

Chief Clinical Officer Renteria provided a status of what services are looking like during the shortage of staff that Tri-City Mental Health has been experiencing, noting that the staffing shortage in the behavioral health field is not unique to Tri-City and that it is being felt all across the country, and most acutely in California; that as one colleague put it very succinctly – it is decimated; that there are vacancies across the state in behavioral health positions, specifically in those master level clinician roles and psychiatry roles which are the bedrock of the service provision that we do, and unfortunately Tri-City is no exception; that Tri-City has several vacancies that has been impacting our ability to provide care; that staff has been working very diligently as a clinical leadership team to provide as much service so that there is less interruption for folks and that we continue to serve the Community. She then reported that Tri-City numbers for intake and outreach are robust; that we have a challenge in getting folks to work and stay employed; and shared that we simply do not have the capacity to see everyone on an individual level that we would like; that to see folks we have been trying to get some groups running because is a very effective and efficient way to meet the needs of our clients, and explained how they work; that it is not a lesser service by any means because it does actually provide people an ability to interact with others and reduce isolation and loneliness; that we are adding groups to address things like depression and anxiety grief, and just wellness from enjoyment and recovery; that in addition to the existing groups through our co-occurring support team, we offer groups through our Wellness Center; that staff are working really diligently to develop care plans for folks involved in group participation; that clinical wellness advocates, which are peer support specialists, are doing a lot of outreach and support of clients as they are in between services or between appointments with our therapists; that today she learned of some additional resignations but expressed being hopeful because the executive team is working really hard on developing retention and recruitment strategies so that we can we can get more folks involved in wanting to be mental health therapists, mental health workers and specialist with our organization. She then expressed being very proud of Tri-City staff because they continue to try and meet the needs of our clients, even though their caseload has sometimes quadrupled trying to cover all the vacancies; and encouraged everyone to be nice to a mental health worker because they are really trying their best and a difficult time, noting that some clients are not happy.

Commissioner Reyes commented that it would be a great bumper sticker to say “be kind to your mental health worker”, and inquired what is attributed to the decrease in staffing.

Chief Clinical Officer Renteria replied that behavioral health had a deficit going into the pandemic; then the pandemic happened and people started to reevaluate their life and the ‘great resignation’ began right cross employment sectors, people are moving, are deciding to do different things, deciding work life balance, and these jobs are very taxing and can be very difficult, pointing out that the private sector is offering folks schedules that can be done 100% virtually, really big large sign-on bonuses, and the ability to make their own schedule, which are things that are different than what the public sector can do; however, that we are trying to be creative internally to see how we can support staff and having more work life balance and be more competitive.

Discussion ensued about client referrals; about the workgroups and safety measures at the Wellness Center; about telehealth services; about university internships to create more mental health professionals; about the great resignation; about moving forward with the Tech Suite

Innovation Project; about current vacant positions at Tri-City and about the steps taken and policies implemented to work in filling those positions; about conversations to boost staff morale and focus on the successes and the joy of this work, as well in self-care; about continued critical staff training to distinguish Tri-City like a premier training and learning institution; and about informing the client about the current treatment status focusing on the value of what we are offering, more of what we can do rather of what we cannot do, which is more of a multi-disciplinary team-based approach to care.

Chief Clinical Officer Renteria stated that she will continue to keep the Mental Health Commission abreast of what is going on, noting that she is really encouraged by the group planning work that is happening here at Tri-City which will be a good offering to the Community.

The Mental Health Commission thanked Chief Clinical Officer Renteria for her work and report.

JPA Administrator/Clerk Olmos reported that a comment submitted via chat from Mary McQueen indicates that Tri-City should focus on the successes of all staff, not just clinical, to change the culture to one that is client friendly and client driven; and that she concurs with Chief Clinical Officer Renteria's comments.

COMMISSION ITEMS AND REPORTS

Commissioner Villanueva reported that approximately 10 days ago, he had a very good conversation with Chief Clinical Officer Renteria, and indicated he was very satisfied with the conversation wherein she shared with him that Tri-City is developing an innovative program to help with prostitution issues in the three Cities.

Commissioner Watson expressed being glad that outside agencies, like Project Return, for being able to utilize the Wellness Center to have an in-person type of activity beginning on March 14th. She then expressed concern about the decline on virtual attendance for support groups because of 'zoom fatigue', and is hopeful that soon the masking restrictions will be lifted as we move to a more endemic, not pandemic, kind of situation.

Commissioner Reyes, as a former public health nurse, announced that National Public Health Week will take place on April 6th – 12th, noting that she had received some information and stats such as California being ranked the worst state in the nation in terms of pollution, which poor air quality can have severe health effects and can impact a large number of people, particularly young children and older adults; that only 83% of students graduate from high school in California, which is the 15th lowest high school graduation rate in the nation, noting that this is a public health concern as there is a strong connection between education and health.

Chair Henderson recommended a book by Dr Kelly Harding called 'The Rabbit Effect' which talks about relationships and how to make the world better through kindness; and explained the "rabbit effect".

PUBLIC COMMENT


Mary McQueen, former Tri-City staff member, stated that she is the trainer for the Los Angeles County southern regions and Tri-City, for a project funded by the CHF to center the peer voices with the implementation of the SB 803 (Senate Bill 803) rollout Peer Certification, to bring their voices to the table so that their ideas can be heard. She explained that she represents

stakeholders input sessions with peers in the communities at peer run organizations, substance abuse organizations, mental health organizations, and the peers that we serve in our communities, and whoever is interested in advocating around the Peer Certification about how can we better serve our clients, and about what the peer expansion may look like, noting that they may have ideas that we never thought of.

Jennifer Otero, a participant at Tri-City Wellness Center, spoke in support of proceeding with in-person groups at the Wellness Center because she believes it would be very important to mental health and social wellbeing to participate in person; and pointed out that if not able to meet in-person, then at least be able to enact the video portion of the virtual platform RingCentral to see each other.

ADJOURNMENT

At 4:43 p.m., on consensus of the Mental Health Commission its Regular Meeting of March 8, 2022 was adjourned. The next Regular Meeting of the Mental Health Commission will be held on Tuesday, April 12, 2022 at 3:30 p.m. via teleconference due to the COVID-19 pandemic, pursuant to Government Code § 54953.



Micaela P. Olmos, JPA Administrator/Clerk