

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE OF SARASOTA COUNTY

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH
STAKEHOLDERS' CONSORTIUM**

PLANNING COMMITTEE

December 13, 2005

Members Present:

Catherine Clouse
Phil Gorelick
Ken Alexander
Pauline MacDonald
Bob Piper

Kelly Lewin
Shelia Zelonis
Don Ottinger
Debbie Spellman
Maria Garcia-Consellas
Kristie Skoglund

Staff Present:

Chip Taylor
Michael Theall

James Schulz
Pauline Tracy

Michael Theall distributed copies of the minutes of the last meeting. The committee approved the minutes.

Review of Community Forum

Catherine Clouse distributed information related to the first of the Community Forums that was conducted at Tuttle Elementary with members of the Family Resource Network. Kelly Lewin assisted with the organizing the first meeting. The meeting was held on December 6th and was lead by Tim Dutton and Catherine Clouse of SCOPE. Nine families were in attendance and they were very active in their participation. The meeting began with some discussion regarding their issues related to the current status of operations within the mental health system of the county. The issues of affordability, accessibility, awareness, and availability were addressed and everyone filled out a survey at the end.

The results were passed out to the committee. The process of the meeting was to generate discussion and then have the families write down their issues on the survey that was generated at the close. The results indicated that the bigger issues related to awareness of treatments available and trying to get to the right services. Originally, some members thought issues of hours of operation and transportation may have been big issues, but affordability and other issues such as were mentioned earlier appeared to be dominant with this group. All of the families had a family member that had received services within the past year.

Their need to services was mixed including issues such as Augsberger Syndrome, autism, Bipolar disorder, depression, and Attention Deficit Disorder.

Kelly Lewin was complimented for her preparation for the meeting. She was able to separate the participants into groups and paired families up in ways where she believed that participation would be greatest. Ken reported that the range of services was wide and all of the people were advocates in one way or another due to their attempting to access services.

It was then discussed as to where the committee would go for the next set of forums. Sheila Zelonis agreed to get some participants from the school system. Three categories of forums are being planned and they are broken down in groups of advocacy, referrers, and consumers. An example was that teachers, guidance counselors and school system employees would be considered to be referrers. Advocacy groups such as the CHAT groups would be considered an advocacy groups.

Shelia Zelonis was working on the school system. Catherine Clouse was going to work on getting SURE. Maria Garcia-Consellas was going to set up a meeting from the Hispanic community. Michael has set up three meetings with CHIP groups in Venice, North Port and Englewood. Phil Gorelick has set up a meeting at Jewish Children and Family Services. Dee Bohan was going to set up a meeting in Englewood of consumers. The questions that remain are groups such as Police Officers, Attorneys, Senior Friendship Centers, and a panel of providers. It was further recommended that we seek out Juvenile Justice and probation officers as to their needs as well.

The survey will be changed under question 1 and 2 for referral or advocacy groups so that it does not refer to family members. That way referrers and advocacy groups can respond more accurately related to referrals they may have made. It was also stated that the CHAT groups will have a slightly different format due to lack of time in the meeting and the goal is still to have these completed by the end of January.

It was questioned by Chip Taylor as to why there was such reliance upon the survey since we would not be able to achieve any statistical significance with the results. It was further questioned as to why there was not an identification of issues and then developing some priority needs and then take the list of needs to specific groups and get their feedback as to the validity of the issues. The issues were those that were identified by the DCF report and the SCOPE report. The goal was to have the issues identified before and the meeting would be to validate whether or not there were other issues that need attention. Many groups have identified the key issues, are there others and are there needs not met that have come up since people were last surveyed?

It was then stated that the current survey is one where the issues have already been laid out since it was developed from the needs expressed in the DCF report and the SCOPE report. Further, when the meetings are scheduled they are set up as a cross-section of the community, but it was never decided that we would use this in a scientific manner and we were not trying for statistical significance.

Discussion continued on the subject and Ken stated that the last forum seemed to reflect the issues of affordability, accessibility, awareness, and availability but maybe more attention should be paid to the specific issues. The question was then asked as to whether the survey would yield that kind of information. It was stated that the survey was based upon the issues from the SCOPE report and DCF report.

Catherine reported that the survey was never designed to be a scientific instrument, but rather it was a method for gathering information and receiving feedback. After further discussion it was agreed upon that the forums would continue and an attempt would be made to coordinate the discussions in the manner of gathering information on the specific issues as discussed of affordability, accessibility, awareness, and availability.

Debbie stated that she gets numerous letters and she feels that there is some awareness of how consumers feel about services. Bob Piper added that in all of their awareness studies the feedback they receive is mostly that people do not know about all of their services. To that Debbie added that she hoped that the focus of the report that comes out of this would be to provide greater awareness of the needs of the community and the needs related to what this community wants for its services.

The purpose of the plan would be to provide the community where we want to go with services and priorities. The plan would also be placed in the hands of funders such as DCF so that when discretionary funds are available they would know where we wanted the services. They would know our priorities. It could influence other funders such as HSAC as to needs and they could put out an RFP for something deemed necessary for the community.

The direction that was decided to take was to continue on the present path and to focus upon the issue of the four "a's" of affordability, availability, accessibility, and awareness. By the next meeting a much greater amount of information will have been gathered and it could be decided then as to any new direction needed to gather information for the Strategic Plan.

The next meeting of the Planning Committee will be on Tuesday, January 24th at 9:00 a.m. The meeting will be held at the Health Department.