

MHACV strongly supports the cultural center developing services with appropriate cultural healers, as requested by clients. In addition, we hope that, in addition to onsite services, it conducts extensive outreach, especially to the rural areas of Fresno County. There will likely be a continuum of service access, given the levels of acculturation to mainstream culture; with those with more acculturation seeking services at the center and those with less acculturation being more responsive to outreach services. We don't think the objections raised regarding INN project 3 have anything to do with MHSA, the First Amendment or religion for that matter; we think they have to do with cultural differences.

Culture

Generally, culture is made up three parts: visible artifacts, espoused values, and shared implied, but not expressed, assumptions. Artifacts represent the meaning of the second two, but don't replace them. They can be books, statues, symbols, people, clothing, etc.

One of the ways people express their culture is through whatever spiritual practice they follow. This is why there are so many different versions of the various religions in the world; people have to find the version that fits their culture. For example, the cultures of the people that practice the same religion can vary significantly due to the differences in people socioeconomic make up. This cultural piece is what's important to help appropriately serve ethnic underserved populations in their personal recovery from mental illness disability.

Target Population and Penetration Rate (% served from underserved communities)

Having a program focused on reaching and engaging the underserved ethnic communities in a culturally responsive and appropriate way is a great idea, given that, Fresno, like most counties, has abysmally low access (Medi-Cal penetration) rates for their target populations in these groups. A significant part of this is due to lacking culturally appropriate modalities of care and community supports. Simply, all of the three areas of culture are not adequately addressed for people to feel comfortable enough to use county mental health services. This is in addition to service capacity issues. Cultural differences negatively impact access rates in the non-white ethnic groups and this is why it is significantly lower than for Whites.

We think culture needs to be emphasized and that any religion is only a part of culture. When we talk about Shaman, Curaderos etc. it is what they culturally represent to people that is important. Finding strength in a person's recovery needs strong symbolism for the development of personal well being, as disability can often cause a person to lose a sense of a healthy identity.

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