

Network Meeting Minutes – October 29, 2014

Attendees: 40 present and 3 on conference call
Note Taker: Connie Monahan

TOPIC: Meeting details, Welcome, Short Announcements,

Comments: Anne covered the Network meeting logistics and agenda of the meeting. Members introduced themselves and their agencies. Members needing CE's should touch base with Carol White. We also captured agencies represented on a large sheet of paper to affirm the multi-disciplinary representation at the Network: these are listed at the end of the minutes.

TOPIC: Start By Believing, Teresa D'Anza

Comments: Teresa outlined the national campaign and how we'd like to bring it here to NM. The website for further info is www.startbybelieving.org, it was developed by End Violence Against Women International (EVAW). She distributed a one-page handout of our talking points and showed the slide presentation which highlights cases where victims are blamed or not believed. The campaign addresses strategies on how by believing, we can better support victims of sexual assault. If you would like more info, contact Teresa D'Anza at 248-3152.

TOPIC: Street Safe NM, Christine Barber

Comments: Christine gave an overview of her program that started in the wake of the west-side murder cases to better serve those who are involved with sex work. She addressed terminology, services provided, some statistics, and co-occurring conditions such as drug addiction, homelessness, sexually transmitted diseases, etc. She addressed relationships between these conditions and why they are likely to co-occur, for example how drug addiction is related to the extreme stresses of sex work. She addressed the overlap with being a sex worker and sexual assault and how their program responds, what they do, barriers that prevent sex workers from accessing services. She addressed safety issues and the differences between indoor vs. outdoor sex work. Her power point is available on the Network (www.thenetwork-dvsa.org) website.

TOPIC: Casa Q, Eliza Combs

Comments: Casa Q is a new program, created within past two years that serves LGBTQ youth. She showed a brief video from NY that highlighted how LGBTQ youth are often kicked out of their homes after they come out, become runaway and homeless. Complicating issues of alcohol, drug use, violence, foster care, how to continue school, abusive parents, the process of emancipation, and living on the street add to the isolation of these youth. Casa Q is a 10-bed, multi-service home; they can do limited emergency housing. Eliza brought materials about her program, acknowledging it's small and just starting but that she's committed to help with referrals and networking with co-responding partners.

Members who might have clients or know of LGBTQ youth who might be a fit for Casa Q programs, call 505-872-2999. Their services are geared for youth ages 14 thru 18. Website is www.casaq.org.

TOPIC
Comments

Panel: Co-occurrences of Substance Abuse, Homelessness, DV and SA

The three panelists were KC Quirk from Crossroads for Women, Adrien Lawyer from the Transgender Resource Center, and Denicia Cadena from Young Women United. Each gave a brief summary of their program and then a theoretical approach to how we can better work with individuals who are in the midst of Substance Abuse, homelessness, and violence.

- KC noted that their program provides housing and comprehensive living services for homeless women exiting jail or prison with co-occurring substance abuse. Crossroads works to break the cycle, providing tools for self-sufficiency. Their core tenant is trauma informed care, recognizing most of their clients have faced severe if not life-long trauma and violence.
- KC spoke to how many of the people they serve need a safe space, they need space and time to settle down. That their clients are facing multiple complications – not just addiction and incarceration but also brain injury, self-medication, family stressors. Their providers cannot separate addiction and mental health, that is important not to judge or moralize or project one's own standards of health onto the individuals accessing services.
- KC spoke to the balancing act of creating a safe place where women can strengthen their drug-free living while still understanding how individuals may “relapse” and while their rules indicate 30 days free of substance abuse, the real challenge is to provide services, create a healthy environment, affirm progress, etc.
- Adrien addressed some of the words traditionally used – that we focus on substance abuse but really, addiction is a better term in that our problems are not limited to substance abuse – addiction to food, television, sex, cigarettes, internet – the list is endless. The focus is on the behavior that can't be controlled, the behavior that is used a mechanism to cope with pain. Adrien referenced Bruce Alexander from Canada who conducted the Rat Park experiments that showed how rats (like people) are social group animals and one of the core messages of the research was that if rats (like people) are in an environment where they are happy, safe, and in social community, then addiction is not a problem. (For example, rats addicted to morphine that were placed in the social environment provided by the study declined additional morphine and broke their addiction.)
- Adrien spoke to concepts of intersectionality, that we are all more than one thing, we are the culmination of our many identifies. When you have intersecting identities that are oppressed – for example, a Transgender woman of color living in poverty – people face all the difficulties of several overlapping marginalized populations, leaving these individuals with even fewer options.
- Adrien addressed the myth of the demon drug. The general population uses that myth to create separation, that there are some drugs (current focus is often meth) that are so demonic, creates an overblown fear of the drug when in reality, it's not the substance that causes the addition – many individuals use meth and still function or use meth once and can still step away – rather it's us. Something is broken within us: maybe we didn't receive the right attachments that affirmed our value, worth,

and unconditional love. As professionals, we recognize attachment theory for children, it's time to apply that to adults.

- Adrien spoke to the need of possibilities, the need to imagine a life without the substance, see the other side, that if the behavior stops, there will be something better.
- Denicia from Young Women United spoke to their program's goals to build communities where all people have the information, education and resources to make real decisions about their bodies and live. She highlighted their recent program, We are More than our Addiction, to address addiction, pregnancy and parenting. She showed the blaming messages (e.g., 'you must love your drugs more than your kids', or, 'if you really loved your kids you would just stop using') and yet, most of the women were extremely worried about the safety of their children, that they were reluctant to access pre-natal health care knowing they might face this judgment even when research indicates that pre-natal care is more important to a baby's health than the dangers of any drugs.

The three panelists spoke to strategies to work with individuals:

- Work with people in all their intersectionalities. This will benefit more people and will reinforce core messages of self-worth, basic human respect, and empowerment.
- Acknowledge what individuals can do for themselves, create a group consensus on expected behavior as opposed having a set of rules.
- Balance how you handle folks in recovery with folks who are using, the sober/non-sober by looking at the behavior, valuing respect, maintaining a safe space. If the behavior is destructive, communicate that they leave for today and come back tomorrow. It's not the person, it's the behavior you address.
- Focus on strategies that support the folks who are most in need and others will benefit. Example is the transgender advocacy for universal bathrooms which benefits transgender individuals but also benefits many others who would prefer to use single-occupancy bathrooms.
- Small groups can be more intimate and safe yet funders want larger impact and numbers to validate services so part of the approach is to have confidence to know that each person served goes back to their own groups and the benefits spillover to others. We can create the ripples that will continue to spread out, that individuals may not access services but know of the services and that promotes the possibility of change.

TOPIC

Lunch and Networking

Comments

Members wrapped up the meeting and enjoyed lunch and networking.

Next Meeting – December 10, 2014

Agencies represented at the August 27th Network Meeting

- Safe House
- Enlace Comunitario
- Haven House
- Catholic Charities
- City of Albuquerque
- RCC of Central NM
- NM Legal Aid
- Southwest Women's Law Center
- IMPACT
- Resource Center for Victims of Violent Death
- CVRC
- NM Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs
- Rio Rancho Public Schools
- Rio Rancho PD – Crime Victims Assistance Unit
- Sexual Assault Services of NWNM
- Casa Q
- Transgender Resource Center
- Street Safe NM
- HSD BHSD
- Crossroads for Women and Maya's Place
- Precious Gifts Transitional Housing
- Aging and Long Term Care Dept
- CDS Case Management
- Young Women United
- Encuentro
- Casa de Salud
- Albuquerque SANE