



PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH WORK GROUP

Assets, Challenges, Opportunities & Metrics

Overview

The Physician and Mental Health Work Group was asked by Lucas Metropolitan Housing to identify assets, challenges, opportunities, and metrics regarding the availability of physical and mental health services in the target community. Committee members are all experts in the areas of criminal justice reform, health care, public health, community relations, community organizing, banking, insurance and issue that effect those with physical challenges, offering a diverse and well-informed point of view.

Overview of Assets, Opportunities and Challenges

There was no disagreement among Committee Members that the target neighborhood faces significant challenges and fewer opportunities when addressing concerns related to the physical and mental health of the target population. While there is a perception that there are many mental and physical health services available, there is also growing concern that those services are both nonresponsive to the actual needs of the community and inaccessible to those who need them. The lack of a strong and organized focus on health and mental health as important to the quality of the lives lived by residents makes initiatives of the nature considered herein extremely difficult.

It was clear to this committee that the narrative around this conversation is generally flawed and misdirected. While opportunities to change this narrative exist, they require the development of a well-managed plan developed with significant community input.

Assets

Group participants identified the following assets as available in the target area.

1. The Re-entry Program, designed to ensure that the return of those formerly incarcerated into communities, is smooth and supported.
2. There are a significant number of community based physical and mental health programs (see challenges below, for further information)
3. Good community regarding Health as the New Wealth.
4. Community Providers all seem to know each other and can discuss and plan for growth and “gap” issues.

Challenges

1. Services should be more accessible to those who need them.
2. There is a strong presence of racial and cultural insensitivity within the hospital systems.
3. Service professionals must be taught to show more empathy including those who are not born or trained in this country.
4. There must be a stronger focus on providing accessible and affordable mental health services to all minorities and those living in poverty.
5. It is important that emotional health issues be addressed using both secular and non-secular methodologies.
6. Elected officials including State Representatives must pay more attention to the need for increased mental health services for People of Color. More pressure must be placed on them.
7. More services that address the mental health needs of People of Color must be developed. There are few resources to address the need.
8. Staff managing mental health issues are not always properly trained. Solid training of staff is essential. Small agencies are not always comfortable with mental health referrals.
9. Resources for both mental and physical health for those who cannot pay are not easy to find; 211 is not generally helpful in this regard, especially when it comes to mental health issues and the handling of those issues. Little information about who is available in the area to provide this service.
10. There is a major increase in the number of suicides by young black people.
11. Front line staff are stressed and “burned out”.
12. Community members don’t use the resources that are available to them.
13. Poverty must be de-stigmatized.
14. Mental Health professional must be more present in the community.

15. Those with disabilities have limited services. Their needs are often ignored.
16. The financial instability found in most communities of color prevents healthy lifestyles.
17. The paperwork associated with obtaining services is burdensome for most patients and presents a barrier to obtaining care.
18. Lack of transportation is a barrier to obtaining services.
19. Significant complaints of improper treatment within hospital settings. An example of someone waiting in the emergency room for 5 hours was given.
20. There is a lack of understanding or ability to advocate for themselves.
21. Significant staffing shortages are problematic

Opportunities

1. To strengthen the conversation that Health is the New Wealth thereby promoting self-advocacy and attention to the real barriers to proper health care.
2. There is a real opportunity to focus on the importance of destigmatizing poverty thereby allowing for a clearer pathway for access to well-formed and accessible care.
3. Now is a great time to increase outreach to include more Black men into the conversation regarding health.
4. To increase the competency of staff/services through increased training.
5. By aggressively providing a platform for other to tell their stories, there is an opportunity to reintroduce self-worth and value to community members.

Metrics (Committee members, please add your thoughts below)

1. Prior to June 2022, hold at least two (2) community-based meetings called by service Providers, where the issues presented herein are discussed with community members and area service Providers for the purpose of education and empowerment.

Summary

The issues confronting residents of the target community are many, longstanding and complicated. In the case of mental and physical health services, complexity is made worse by the presence and impact of poverty, the inability to effectively self-advocate and an overwhelming lack of empathy and cultural competency by Providers in the communities intended to be served. The opportunities to change these circumstances are available and perhaps even “doable” but require substantial management and input from the members of a community already ravaged by years of inattention. The importance of change in these

systems must be driven by those most effected with unwavering assistance from those institutions who have the responsibility to serve them.