



San Mateo County Health System: Behavioral Health & Recovery Services

A Primary Prevention Framework for Substance Abuse and Mental Health

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Prevention Institute
facilitated this planning
process and authored
the framework.

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and equity at the center of community well-being

Table of Contents

Introduction: Expanding a Service Model	1
Behavioral Health and Prevention	1
Implications for the Role of Behavioral Health and Recovery Services.	2
Overarching Focus	2
Principles for Planning and Implementation	3
Strategies: A focus on place, people, prosperity, and partnerships.	3
Strategy 1: Enhance Place	3
Decreased availability of alcohol and other drugs	4
Stable housing	4
Safety	4
Physical environments that support social connection	5
Strategy 2: Connect People.	6
Reduced exposure to violence for children and youth	7
Quality environments for children and youth	7
Supported families	8
Supportive workplaces	8
Community connections and relationships.	8
Older adults are actively engaged in the community	8
Strategy 3: Foster Prosperity	10
Reduced stigma	10
Economic self-sufficiency	11
Strategy 4: Expand Partnerships	12
Engaged government sector	12
Engaged business community	12
Engaged community members	13
Conclusion	14
Appendix A: Methodology.	15
Appendix B: Planning Group Members	16
References.	17

INTRODUCTION: Expanding a Service Model

San Mateo County Health System Behavioral Health & Recovery Services (BHRS) is dedicated to promoting wellness, resilience, and recovery so that all San Mateo County residents can live fully as contributing and successful individuals and members of their families and communities. As part of this commitment, BHRS is dedicated not only to treating and serving those in need, but also to reducing the number of people who may need services in the first place. For decades, funding and services have been primarily focused on the treatment end of the continuum. Although part of the original community mental health movement, prevention has been largely absent within the mental health system for several decades. Within the alcohol and other drug services system, prevention has focused primarily on programs aimed at individual behavior change and early intervention. More recent developments—the *RoadMap for Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Prevention: A Guide to Community Action*, the implementation of the alcohol and other drug services strategic plan, and funding through the Mental Health Services Act—have provided an opportunity to examine the underlying factors leading to addiction and mental health-related problems, and to consider evidence-based and promising prevention strategies to reduce the number of people in need of more intensive and long term BHRS services. The purpose of this document is to describe this new prevention approach and provide a broad framework for promoting behavioral health and community well-being.

This approach requires a new way of doing business by expanding prevention efforts to focus on organizational practices and policy change, reaching out to new partners, and taking a comprehensive approach to understanding and addressing the underlying determinants of behavioral health—those elements that influence rates of particular mental health conditions and addiction. Prevention, along with early intervention and treatment, are critical components of the BHRS continuum of care and support. As treatment has focused on the integration of services for individuals with co-occurring mental health and alcohol and other drug disorders for the past three years, this framework creates a similar path for BHRS prevention.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND PREVENTION

Behavioral health is a term which is increasingly utilized to acknowledge that mental health issues and alcohol and other drug problems often go hand in hand and, for many, it is hard to separate one from another. It is an attempt to better address the whole person in the context of their lives, rather than treating someone for depression and ignoring their substance abuse issues or vice versa. In San Mateo County, joining the County Mental Health Department with Alcohol and Other Drugs Services into the division of Behavioral Health & Recovery Services enables the true development of services for those suffering with the co-occurrence of mental disorders and substance abuse disorders.

While it is important to note that there are genetic and biological components to mental illness and substance abuse, emerging evidence suggests that certain behavioral health problems can be prevented, while in others onset may be delayed and severity of symptoms decreased. Prevention efforts are most successful when they use multi-faceted solutions that address not only individuals and families, but also their environments, including home, community, work, and school.

Prevention is a *systematic* process that promotes safe, healthy environments and behaviors, and reduces the likelihood or frequency of an incident, injury, or condition. Ideally, prevention addresses problems *before* they occur, rather than waiting to intervene after symptoms appear or incidents occur. This is called *primary* prevention. Primary prevention is an “upstream” approach focused on stemming the flow of people with problems who need services by improving the physical and social environment so that fewer people are impacted by behavioral health conditions. A primary prevention approach requires looking at the role that the social, physical, economic, and cultural environments play in contributing to behavioral health problems and how those environments can be changed to prevent some behavioral health problems from occurring in the first place—in particular, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder/trauma, suicide, anxiety, poor attachment, bullying, isolation, stigma, and substance abuse. A primary prevention emphasis on behavioral health can also support the care and treatment of those already receiving services, such as through reducing isolation, while also reducing the stigma associated with behavioral health problems.

The BHRS Primary Prevention Framework process identified four prevention strategies that can stem the flow of people who need intensive behavioral health services. These strategies focus on 1) enhancing place, 2) connecting people, 3) fostering prosperity, and 4) expanding partnerships.

By integrating these strategies into the practices, policies, and everyday ways of operating at BHRS, as well as into other departments within government and other sectors in the community, the social, physical, economic, and cultural environments can be modified to improve behavioral health outcomes and quality of life for people in San Mateo County.

Implications for the Role of Behavioral Health and Recovery Services

The recent integration of San Mateo County’s Mental Health Services Division with Alcohol and Other Drugs Services into the division of Behavioral Health & Recovery Services has allowed San Mateo County to adopt a cutting-edge approach to behavioral health and prevention. This framework is intended to guide San Mateo County’s behavioral health efforts with a specific focus on preventing behavioral health problems from occurring initially. As BHRS identifies resources dedicated to prevention, the division will be looking to this framework to identify recommendations that can be adopted and implemented. Additionally, BHRS leadership will seek partnerships with other departments within government and other sectors in the community to influence recommendations that may not fall within BHRS’s purview. This approach will allow the framework to reach its fullest potential by working with other sectors to apply a behavioral health lens to their work to promote community well-being and positive behavioral health for all San Mateo County residents.

Overarching Focus

The overarching focus of this framework is to influence public policy and organizational practices in order to promote the emotional, psychological, and physical well-being of San Mateo County residents with particular emphasis on individuals and communities at risk.

Principles for Planning and Implementation

This prevention framework complements other County initiatives aimed at treatment and services, by specifically articulating the strategies and actions that can prevent people from needing services in the first place, while supporting all people in the community in achieving positive well-being. The Planning Committee (see Appendix B) developed the following principles to help guide the process for the planning, development, and implementation of the framework:

- Behavioral health is integral to individual health and community well-being.
- Our cultural diversity is a strength that must be accounted for and utilized in our approach.
- The participation and input from community members, including persons receiving behavioral health services and their families, should inform our efforts and community voice should be honored.
- Where people live, work, learn, play, worship, and interact—and the social connections that emerge in these settings—influence wellness in general and behavioral health specifically.
- The policies, decisions, and actions of public and private organizations, institutions, and workplaces impact behavioral health outcomes.
- Strategies must be inclusive of all those living in San Mateo County—regardless of race, ethnicity, language, nationality, age, gender, sexual orientation, or presence of behavioral health conditions.
- Partnering with related community efforts facilitates the achievement of our outcomes.
- Stigma reduction and striving for its elimination is central to all strategies.
- Focusing on the principal risk and resiliency factors will yield the best results.
- Focusing on strategies that work at the organizational practice and policy levels will reach the greatest number of people and can help prevent behavioral health problems *before* they occur.

Good community design can contribute to a general increase in community networks and trust by creating a “neighborhood feel” where people are encouraged to interact with each other in a safe environment.

STRATEGIES: A focus on place, people, prosperity, and partnerships

STRATEGY 1

Enhance Place: Enhance the places people live, work, play, go to school, worship, and socialize to support emotional and psychological health, reduce substance abuse, and decrease exposure to violence.

There is a growing body of evidence that the built environment—the man-made physical structures and infrastructure of communities—affects behavioral health both directly and indirectly.¹ The most prevalent environmental factors influencing behavioral health are: sense of over-crowding in the home; access to green space; access to community facilities; fear of crime;² availability of substances, such as alcohol, illicit drugs, and tobacco. For example, residents of buildings with greenspace have a stronger sense of community, better relationships with neighbors, and report less violence in dealing with domestic disputes.³ Research has also demonstrated reductions in

reported symptoms of depression following an improvement in housing conditions and/or location.⁴ Furthermore, homelessness can contribute to behavioral health conditions and stable affordable housing is crucial to ensure positive well-being for all.

Place can also reduce isolation and foster social interactions (see Strategy 2). Good community design can contribute to a general increase in community networks and trust by creating a “neighborhood feel” where people are encouraged to interact with each other in a safe environment. For instance, neighbors visit each other more on small streets with little traffic.⁵ Further, how communities are designed—including situating housing close to businesses and ensuring that residents can walk easily and safely around their communities—can foster an opportunity to connect with neighbors and promote social interaction.⁶ One example of ways in which communities can support social interaction is through community gardens, which provide both green space and an opportunity for neighbors to meet and develop social cohesion. Increasingly, researchers are evaluating the effects of community gardens on individuals. Recent studies document that residents involved in community gardening experience numerous health benefits, including improved mental health. Additionally, community gardens also contribute to promoting social health and community cohesion.^{7,8} By planning for and building community gathering and green spaces, communities can foster social connectedness and community interaction.

Outcomes for Enhancing Place

Decreased availability of alcohol and other drugs: Reduce the conditions in the community that lead to inappropriate use of alcohol and the use of other illegal drugs.

SAMPLE ACTION STEPS

- Implement land use and zoning policies to decrease the density of alcohol and drug paraphernalia outlets.
- Implement land use and zoning policies to decrease the density of alcohol advertising in communities.
- Require responsible beverage services and advertisement practices for businesses.

Stable housing: Improve the availability, quality, location, greening, and design of affordable housing for working families and for people receiving behavioral health services.

SAMPLE ACTIONS

- Ensure affordable housing options particularly for underserved populations, such as low-income families and those with mental illness and substance abuse problems.
- Create guidelines for affordable and mixed housing to take into consideration strategies that promote behavioral health and social engagement (e.g., parks nearby, easy access to trees, sunlight, areas to congregate, walking paths).

Safety: Improve the look, feel, and safety of communities in order to promote an overall atmosphere of safety and promote positive well-being among residents.

SAMPLE ACTIONS

- Develop neighborhood safety plans supported by coordination in city and county departments and with community involvement in planning and implementation.
- Remove elements that threaten the overall aesthetic/ambiance in neighborhoods such as blight, garbage, and unwanted or offensive graffiti.

- Encourage activities that improve the overall aesthetic/ambiance such as planting trees and community gardens, painting murals, and holding clean-up days.
- Ensure that the physical design and aesthetics of neighborhoods represent the cultural diversity of communities.
- Implement Neighborhood Watch programs to increase perceived safety in neighborhoods.
- Ensure that the community environment supports positive social interactions.

Physical environments that support social connection: Ensure that communities are designed to support and foster connections among residents.

SAMPLE ACTIONS

- Provide and maintain safe and inviting places for youth, seniors, and others such as open green space, pocket parks with benches and other places to sit, skate parks, community gardens, and neighborhood centers. An important component of creating inviting places is the addition of public art.
- Engage community members, including persons receiving behavioral health services and their families, in the creation and maintenance of their community to establish a sense of ownership.
- Maintain and develop programming and facilities (including park programs) to support social connection, recreation, and physical activity.
- Stress the importance of social connection when designing new streets and streetscapes, public spaces, and community hubs.

TRY THIS TO ENHANCE PLACE

- Planning departments can examine how proposed projects foster social interaction and require new development projects to address this in their plans.
- City and county government planning processes can identify meaningful ways to get input from culturally diverse communities and from persons receiving behavioral health services and their families, to ensure that planning processes promote positive well-being for all County residents.
- Schools districts and Parks and Recreation Departments can enter into joint-use agreements to allow community residents to utilize school facilities (such as parks, playgrounds, and libraries) outside of school hours.
- City and county governments can implement land use and zoning policies to decrease the density of alcohol and drug paraphernalia outlets.
- Community groups can start Neighborhood Watch programs to ensure that neighbors know each other, are looking out for each other, and are taking collective action to make their needs known to others.
- Local mom and pop stores can establish viable alternatives to marketing and sales of inexpensive, high alcohol content beverages in low-income communities, including advocating for support (e.g., subsidized refrigeration) to provide affordable and healthy fruits and vegetables.
- Community residents and local businesses can plant trees and mini-gardens to enhance the appearance of neighborhoods, making them more welcoming.
- Local government, schools, or other entities can support and encourage the development of community gardens.
- BHRS can continue to support community gardens on the campus of mental health facilities.

Strong social networks and connections correspond with significant increases in physical and mental health, academic achievement, and local economic development, as well as lower rates of homicide, suicide, and alcohol and drug abuse.

STRATEGY 2

Connect People: Strengthen positive social-emotional development, enhance social connections, and reduce isolation to support emotional health, promote psychological well-being, reduce substance abuse, and decrease exposure to violence.

Quality relationships characterized by trust, communication, and absence of violence can have a significant impact on behavioral health outcomes. Research demonstrates that social ties, a sense of belonging, and social support (both actual and perceived) all play a significant role in preventing behavioral health problems and improving outcomes.⁹ Strong social networks and connections correspond with significant increases in physical and mental health, academic achievement, and local economic development, as well as lower rates of homicide, suicide, and alcohol and drug abuse.^{10,11,12,13,14,15,16}

Developing social connections begins at birth when attachment and bonding to one's caregiver is critical and can contribute to positive adjustment later in life. One study showed that school aged children who developed secure attachments to their caregivers as infants displayed less aggression and outward behavioral problems than children with insecure attachments.¹⁷ In addition to developing social connections, experiences in early childhood have additional impacts on brain development. For instance, early trauma can harm the part of the brain responsible for impulse control, problem-solving, and empathy.¹⁸ Experiencing violence, stress, and trauma at a young age results not only in developmental delays, but also in a “re-wiring” of the child's brain. Survival skills are preferentially developed at the expense of learning and other social skills.¹⁹ Interventions later in life can have a beneficial effect, however, it is more difficult to reverse the adverse affects later in life and intervention can be more costly than promoting positive attachment in the first place.²⁰

Communities play a role in providing positive influences and interventions. Social connections within communities can have a positive impact on the behavioral and emotional health of residents, and contribute to overall community well-being. A strong sense of connectedness has been found to contribute to collective efficacy—the willingness of community members to act for the common good—which particularly impacts behavioral health.²¹ Other studies demonstrate that people who have a strong sense of social trust report higher levels of life satisfaction. Strong levels of social connections within a neighborhood are predictive of lower suicide rates²² and studies demonstrate that children are mentally and physically healthier in neighborhoods where adults talk to each other.²³ One study showed that strong social connections are a protective factor for adolescents living in neighborhoods with high levels of perceived ambient disorder (i.e., graffiti, public drunkenness).²⁴ Social connection is also pivotal later in life when older adults are often vulnerable to isolation. For instance, strong social circles can reduce the risk of cognitive impairment in older adults, including Alzheimer's disease. One study showed that, despite the same level of pathology, those with stronger social networks scored higher on cognitive tests than those with weaker social networks.²⁵

In addition to the neighborhood environment, other community settings can foster social connections by providing an atmosphere of trust, safety, and open communication. For instance, quality childcare, school, and other youth settings can have a mitigating effect on children from high risk backgrounds.²⁶ A 2002 report from the Institute of Medicine explored the impact of youth settings on adolescent well-being. The report found that exposure to positive settings helped

young people to develop positive assets, such as good mental health and positive self regard, emotional regulation skills, conflict resolution skills, and social connection and a commitment to civic engagement. These assets are best cultivated in settings that are physically and psychologically safe and secure, that allow opportunities to form meaningful relationships with peers and adults, and that cultivate a sense of belonging.²⁷ Research also demonstrates that children who participate in after-school activities like clubs or sports have shown enhanced social and cognitive skills, positive social behavior, fewer risky behaviors, and higher levels of academic achievement.²⁸ The school environment can also foster learning, emotional, and physical safety and generally promote a sense of “connectedness” among students, teachers, and staff. Increasingly there are school programs, both in the United States and abroad, that take an environmental approach to this issue and focus on the entire school community to address issues of mental well-being, substance use, bullying, and other factors which limit positive development. Among adults, studies demonstrate that participation in community, voluntary, and religious organizations provides a sense of belonging and general social identity²⁹ so community organizations, as well as workplaces, can also play a role in fostering social connection.

Outcomes for Connecting People

Reduced exposure to violence for children and youth: Improve family well-being by decreasing children’s exposure to mistreatment, abuse, and neglect while increasing protective/resilience factors such as social connections.

SAMPLE ACTIONS

- Provide excellent, culturally appropriate parenting skills training and education for all in a range of venues (early childhood settings, schools, hospitals, workplaces, adult education, etc.).
- Advocate and prioritize funding for entities that help parents bond and attach to young children.
- Provide families with services and support to foster health and empowerment.

Quality environments for children and youth: Ensure the highest quality environments to support the development of positive assets in children and youth and positively impact health and well-being.

SAMPLE ACTIONS

- Ensure positive climates in childcare, foster care, preschool, and school settings that are culturally appropriate and support age-appropriate developmental assets.
- Integrate bullying prevention, respect for self and others, making healthy choices, problem solving, assertiveness, sharing, and empathy-building skills into existing curricula for preschool, childcare, and k-12 education, and ensure that teachers and providers are adequately trained to address these issues.
- Ensure a variety of culturally appropriate opportunities/activities in communities for young people to succeed, feel accomplished, and develop a sense of control over their lives.
- Create internships and jobs for youth of all capabilities and provide job training and mentoring to make youth feel welcome.

Supported families: Recognize the integrity, uphold dignity, and enhance functioning of the family system as integral to the overall health of the individual.

SAMPLE ACTIONS

- Ensure culturally diverse, healthy families are portrayed in media and advertisements.
- Establish gathering places and social functions that support families and are culturally-appropriate.
- Welcome new families by offering resources, mentoring and supports.

Supportive workplaces: Ensure all workplaces support positive behavioral health among all employees.

SAMPLE ACTIONS

- Promote work-life balance for all employees, including part-time and low-wage workers, and institute family-friendly policies.
- Create programs in the workplace for leadership and community involvement, including allowing employees to participate in community service as part of their work week.

Community connections and relationships: Promote opportunities and activities that bring together community residents and foster civic participation and engagement.

SAMPLE ACTIONS

- Encourage interaction through intergenerational and interracial activities as well as around common interests to encourage social connection and volunteerism.
- Enhance opportunities for seniors to interact with each other and with other age groups through formal civic engagement planning, events, and programming.
- Maintain and develop programming and facilities (including park programs) to support social connection and recreation.
- Create internships and jobs for youth of all capabilities, including young people receiving behavioral health services, as a way of investing in the community, and provide job training and mentoring to make youth feel welcome.

Older adults are actively engaged in the community: Create meaningful opportunities for older adults to become actively engaged in various aspects of community life.

SAMPLE ACTIONS

- Encourage respectful and culturally-appropriate interaction through intergenerational activities to promote social connection and volunteerism.
- Involve older adults in initiatives that support youth, such as mentor opportunities and creating safe places for young people.
- Create intergenerational partnerships in community endeavors.

TRY THIS TO CONNECT PEOPLE

- Workplaces can provide employees with paid time off to volunteer at their child's school.
- Government agencies can create positions on advisory boards for youth and older adults, including persons receiving behavioral health services and their families, to allow them to share their perspective and contribute to decision-making processes.
- Schools can hold parent meetings outside of school hours and provide childcare during meetings to allow working parents to participate.
- Local businesses can provide internship and job training opportunities for youth, including youth with mental health challenges.
- Community-based organizations that serve different ages can establish cross-age mentoring and buddy programs or other opportunities to bring different generations together (e.g., creative and performing arts, recreational activities, community gardening).
- Schools and businesses can work with government to ensure high-quality and immediate support and services for people who have experienced trauma and loss.
- Community groups can provide support and foster healing from trauma in the community.
- Community members and local businesses can create community events to bring people together to get to know each other and initiate longer term projects that bring the community together.
- Community residents can support businesses that are part of fostering a healthy community.
- Schools, businesses, and communities can establish Safe Routes to School to ensure that all young people feel safe going to and from schools. Businesses have an important role to play in keeping an eye out and providing a safe haven to those in need.
- Community members and local businesses can establish "welcome to the neighborhood" programs to reach out to and connect with new members of the community.
- Schools, community groups, and workplaces can provide training and support for bystander approaches to address bullying and stigma.
- Workplaces and government agencies can educate families about mental health in order to reduce stigma.

Prosperity and economic vitality is critical for people with serious behavioral health issues because their conditions often keep them in poverty, dependent on public assistance, and unable to work. Therefore, building communities which foster prosperity for all is critical to developing healthy families and neighborhoods.

STRATEGY 3

Foster Prosperity: Reduce stigma and enhance economic opportunity and self-sufficiency, especially for those most at risk for mental health problems and substance abuse.

A thriving economy is critically important for healthy, safe communities and stable families. Additionally, the presence of strong businesses helps ensure financially secure and healthy neighborhoods, and can provide a diversity of jobs which enable people to live above the poverty level. Ensuring a diversity of businesses and commercial services in a neighborhood can allow residents to buy healthy food and access other necessary services, and helps to attract further investment, both private and public, in services and infrastructure.³⁰

Conversely, poverty threatens the security of families, strains parent/child relationships, exacerbates behavioral health conditions, and increases the chances of child and elder abuse. Previous literature reviews found that “persons experiencing involuntary job loss are at higher risk for mental health problems. Furthermore, return to paid employment can have positive effects on mental health.”³¹ Higher levels of parental education have been linked to better parenting styles, which predict better behavioral outcomes in young children.^{32,33} Prosperity and economic vitality is critical for people with serious behavioral health issues because their conditions often keep them in poverty, dependent on public assistance, and unable to work. Therefore, building communities which foster prosperity for all is critical to developing healthy families and neighborhoods, even for those with serious behavioral health issues.

Additionally, the stigma associated with having a serious behavioral health issue is a significant contributing factor in keeping people on the fringes of society and in poverty. Stigma can also result in ostracism, and situations that endanger one’s personal identity, social life, and economic opportunities.³⁴ A review of the literature on stigma interventions shows that stigma reduction efforts must be culturally competent and comprehensive, occurring at the personal/interpersonal, family, work, community, and policy levels.^{35,36,37}

Outcomes for Fostering Prosperity

Reduced stigma: Support initiatives that reduce stigma of mental illness, addiction, and other issues, such as sexual orientation, immigration status, language abilities, and physical ability.

SAMPLE ACTIONS

- Reduce stigma through structured opportunities for diverse groups (age, race/ethnicity, culture, ability, etc.) to interact.
- Ensure stigma reduction and discrimination policies and practices are implemented in schools, workplaces, and public service organizations and agencies.
- Support existing county programs that aim to reduce stigma of mental illness and substance abuse through culturally competent community education and public awareness campaigns.

Economic self-sufficiency: Ensure that communities have a robust business economy and that residents can support themselves in order to support positive behavioral health outcomes in communities, families, and individuals.

SAMPLE ACTIONS

- Improve the mix of business types in key business centers and explore the possibility of developing unused and vacant property for new, locally owned and operated commercial ventures.
- Provide job training opportunities for adults and youth.
- Provide job opportunities for people with mental illness and/or addiction and the necessary supports, including medical benefits, time off for counseling and family time, transportation to and from work, to keep them employed.
- Increase outreach for and accessibility of safety net resources and supports, including social security, food stamps, etc.
- Provide high-quality educational opportunities across the life span to build the capacity of individuals to become economically secure.
- Require economic development planners to assess the impact of their development efforts on behavioral health.

TRY THIS TO PROMOTE PROSPERITY

- Persons in recovery can be ambassadors to the community to increase awareness, confront myths, and create greater understanding
- Libraries can stock books for both children and adults that include people with mental health disorders.
- Businesses can provide job opportunities for people with addiction and mental health disorders.
- Schools and workplaces can ensure that anti-discrimination policies are in place and are adhered to.
- Government services can be coordinated to provide an appropriate mosaic of services to families in need and at risk of behavioral health problems.
- Businesses, education, and government can coordinate job training, employment support, and placement services for those formerly incarcerated, hospitalized, or in drug treatment.

Addressing the underlying contributors to preventable mental illness and addiction requires many sectors in government, business, and the community to understand their own roles and contributions and to work together.

STRATEGY 4

Expand Partnerships: Engage multiple government sectors, businesses, and community members—including people receiving behavioral health services and their families—in enhancing places, strengthening connections among people, and fostering prosperity to improve emotional health, promote mental well-being, reduce substance abuse, and decrease exposure to violence, through their actions, decisions, practices, and policies.

The underlying contributors to preventable mental illness and addiction—place, people, and prosperity—expand well beyond the authority and influence of Behavioral Health and Recovery Services. In fact, altering them spans many sectors in government, business, and the community. Advancing this primary prevention approach to behavioral health requires each of these sectors to understand their own roles and contributions and to work together to achieve successful outcomes. Enhancing place, connecting people, and fostering prosperity to improve behavioral health will require the participation of multiple partners.

Outcomes for Expanding Partnerships

Engaged government sector: Ensure that various departments within government apply a behavioral health lens when making decisions regarding community issues, including issues of planning and community design, housing, transportation, economic development, education, and health.

SAMPLE ACTIONS

- Allocate resources that address prevention efforts and the strategies articulated in the framework.
- Use the framework as a guide for future planning and decision making.
- Identify at least one strategy to implement.
- Create a working group to determine how the framework can be integrated throughout departments within government.
- Recognize and provide incentives to community and business partners that successfully integrate the framework into their practices and policies.
- Create guidelines for doing behavioral health impact assessments on community spaces that will be redesigned. Ensure that future development supports positive behavioral health outcomes.
- Elected officials at the city, county, and school district levels, review the framework and integrate the framework into decision-making processes.

Engaged business community: Encourage businesses within the community to apply a behavioral health lens when making decisions regarding their employees, customers, clients, and the surrounding community.

SAMPLE ACTIONS

- Reflect behavioral health goals and priorities in business marketing and in workplace health policies.
- Support employees by incorporating appropriate framework strategies into healthy workplace practices and policies. Adopt family-oriented business practices, offer opportunities for advancement, and support employees in achieving their higher education goals.
- Be good neighbors and take care of the community. Adopt practices that support the community, invest in youth, give back, and support local products and services.

- Employ people who are living in the community, including people receiving behavioral health services.
- Create a coalition of businesses that are family-friendly and support employee well-being.
- Examine hiring practices and policies of businesses to see if practices are biased, especially against people with behavioral health problems.
- Become a safety zone for youth, especially on their way to and from school.

Engaged community members: Community residents and organizations can identify ways to support one another, enhance their communities, and advocate for policies that support community well-being.

SAMPLE ACTIONS

- Identify and reach out to key leaders and decision-makers in the community, including leaders of faith and ethnic groups. These leaders can help promulgate the strategies put forth in the framework.
- Work with people in the community to identify something in the framework that is a priority and reach out to elected officials to advocate for that strategy.
- Volunteer! Create service clubs, foster multi-generational mentoring opportunities between youth and older adults, visit older adults that are living alone.
- Stimulate the local economy by supporting local businesses, services, and products.
- Create a community association to increase social interaction and welcome new people. Create other opportunities for people to be actively engaged in the community.
- Provide community-based child care that allows people with kids to participate in community activities.
- Engage faith-based and other community-based organizations in advocating for local policies and organizational practices that enhance place, connect people, and promote prosperity in order to improve behavioral health outcomes of county residents.
- Recognize the assets that older adults have and find opportunities for them to be useful and valued in the community.

TRY THIS: HOW SAN MATEO COUNTY PARTNERS CAN USE THIS DOCUMENT

- County agencies can review and identify elements in this framework for which they have responsibility and determine potential action steps.
- The County Board of Supervisors and City Councils can adopt this framework.
- Businesses can review and identify elements of the framework to incorporate into their personnel and other organizational practices.
- Community members, including people receiving behavioral health services and their families, can reach out to elected officials and other county decision-makers to advocate for elements of this framework.
- Community-based and faith-based organizations can advocate at the city and county level for the adoption of elements in this framework.
- County agencies can develop a PowerPoint presentation and talking points about this framework to use at community meetings.
- County agencies can train staff on this approach.
- City and county departments and agencies can integrate this framework into their strategic planning so future work can play a role in improving behavioral health outcomes.

Conclusion

Applying a primary prevention framework to behavioral health can help prevent certain conditions, reduce or delay onset and severity of symptoms, and promote positive well-being for all. San Mateo County Health System Behavioral Health & Recovery Services will continue to pave the way for other counties throughout California, and the country, by identifying partners, opportunities, and resources to put this framework into action for all county residents.

APPENDIX A: Methodology

San Mateo County Health System Behavioral Health and Recovery Services: A Primary Prevention Framework for Substance Abuse and Mental Health both reflects the research literature and advances the vision of a broad group of stakeholders in San Mateo. BHRS hired Prevention Institute to facilitate the process, including conducting the research, facilitating planning group meetings, orienting the planning group to a prevention approach, and writing the framework. Key Prevention Institute staff include: Andrea Aiello, Margot Brown, Carol Chao, Rachel Davis, and Linda Shak. The development of the framework is based on a review of relevant literature, analysis of existing San Mateo County documents, and input from the diverse group involved with developing the Mental Health Services Act proposal to the state for prevention and early intervention. The Planning Committee was charged with shaping an overall direction for the framework and identifying the key strategies that would have the greatest impact and the ability to prevent people in the county from needing services in the first place. Members reviewed draft documents and were taken through a facilitated process in which they described the problem, defined terminology, set overall strategy, and identified specific action steps. Once the Planning Committee began to identify strategies, they completed an online survey to help set priorities. Following the creation of a framework, Planning Committee members and BHRS staff had the opportunity to review and provide final input.

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