

# Tri-Cities Community Development Center



*Mental Health Friendly Congregations*

## Mental Health Friendly Congregations



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# *Our Story*

There is an urgent need to reduce mental health stigma and disparity within the African American community. It is my calling, passion and purpose to join the movement within the Mental Health Community to amplify and address this urgent need through active and intentional engagement of the African American Church.

MHFC is a step-by-step process for engaging African American Faith Communities as partners in reducing disparities and stigma while improving outcomes for African American clients/consumers and family members.

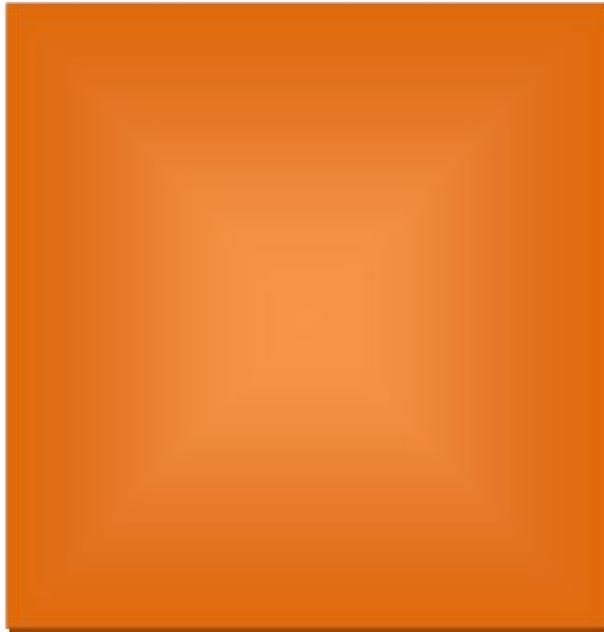
Eighty-seven percent of African-Americans report they are affiliated with a particular religious group, and 95 percent of those claim to be Christians, according to the 2007 U.S. Religious Landscape Study conducted by the Pew Research Center. (The Rev. DeForest "Buster" Soaries, Jr. CNN's "Black in America: Churchd,"

Recognizing this cultural reality, Mental Health Friendly Congregations conducted five trainings at churches of various sizes and denominational affiliations in Alameda County. We trained 580 African American clergy, congregants, consumers and family members representing approximately 15,000 African Americans. Our innovative strategy provides vital information about what mental illness is and isn't. Attendees are then introduced to information regarding what mental health is or looks like in the African American community and church. Finally, we provide a road map for churches to create an inclusive, supportive and welcoming community of acceptance and love.

If your organization is committed to improving mental health outcomes for the African American Community, MHFC is here to partner with you in reducing stigma, discrimination and disparities in your county. Join consumers, family members, churches, providers and advocacy groups who are partnering with TCCDC to develop Mental Health Friendly Congregations.

*Sincerely,*

Pastor Horacio Jones



# Mental Health Friendly Congregations



## Strategic Plan Of Implementation

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Submitted by Pastor Horacio S. Jones

Mental Health Friendly Congregations is an indigenous community defined strategy developed within the cultural context of the African American consumer and faith communities. It is essential that any effort to implement the strategies contained within this report recognize the importance of remaining culturally relevant, honoring and responsive.

Therefore it is highly recommended that any effort to implement the MHFC model in whole or in part include the trainers and or staff of Tri Cities Community Development Center. For assistance, training, certification and contractual discussions please contact:

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## **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The Tri-City Community Development Center (TCCDC) is a faith-based Non-Profit CBO building partnerships to serve residents in the Tri-Cities of Southern Alameda County: Fremont, Newark, and Union City. Our mission is to help low and low to moderate income women, men, youth, families and communities to move in a positive direction towards healthy lifestyles, personal empowerment, educational advancement for youth, and reintegration for ex-offenders. We put forth this charge as a community defined strategy and upstream approach to reducing the stigma of mental illness for all but specifically the African American community. This can be accomplished through collaborative healthy and mutually beneficial relationships with school districts the county agencies and other essential stakeholders.

A division of TCCDC, Mental Health Friendly Congregations MHFC, is a comprehensive, systematic, field tested program design that includes a set of specific strategies for the development of an effective partnership between the African American faith-based and spiritual communities and BHCS, capitalizing on the role of these communities as cultural institutions and a natural support for BHCS clients/consumers and their families. MHFC will include a step by step process for engaging African American Faith Communities as a partner in reducing disparities and improving outcomes for the BHCS African American clients/ consumers.

## **SCOPE OF WORK**

**MHFC addressed Innovation Round II Learning Question 2: *Strengthening Partnership with the Faith-Based Community***

How can the mission, services and purpose of Behavioral Health Care Services BHCS be enhanced through partnerships with African-American churches as cultural institutions and natural places for clients/consumers and families to receive supports in their community?

What are effective ways for African American churches to welcome and integrate mental health consumers into their faith community and to support social inclusion, decrease stigma and discrimination and provide a safe place for people

**Category:** Strategy and Supports

The following mission, vision and values are guiding BHCS in our program development and service delivery decision-making. Together, we will make the behavioral health care system of care stronger, more accessible, and more self-sustainable.

**MISSION:** Our mission is to maximize the recovery, resilience and wellness of all eligible Alameda County residents who are developing or experiencing serious mental health, alcohol or drug concerns.

**VISION:** We envision communities where all individuals and their families can successfully realize their potential and pursue their dreams, and where stigma and discrimination against those with mental health and/or alcohol and drug issues are remnants of the past.

**VALUES:**

**Access**

We value collaborative partnerships with consumers, families, service providers, agencies and communities, where every door is the right door for welcoming people with complex needs and assisting them toward wellness, recovery and resiliency.

**Consumer & Family Empowerment**

We value, support and encourage consumers and their families to exercise their authority to make decisions, choose from a range of available options, and to develop their full capacity to think speak and act effectively in their own interest and on behalf of the others that the represent.

## **Best Practices**

We value clinical excellence through the use of best practices, evidence-based practices, and effective outcomes, include prevention and early intervention strategies to promote well being and optimal quality of life. We value business excellence and responsible stewardship through revenue maximization and the wise and cost-effective use of public resources.

## **Health & Wellness**

We value the integration of emotional, spiritual and physical health care to promote the wellness and resilience of individuals recovering from the biological, social and psychological effects of mental illness and substance use disorders.

## **Culturally Responsive**

We honor the voices, strengths, leadership, languages and life experiences of ethnically and culturally diverse consumers and their families across the lifespan. We value operationalizing these experiences in our service setting, treatment options, and in the processes we use to engage our communities.

## **Socially Inclusive**

We value advocacy and education to eliminate stigma, discrimination, isolation and misunderstanding of person experiencing mental illness and substance use disorders. We support social inclusion and the full participation of consumers and family members to achieve full lives in communities of their choices, where they can live, learn, love, work, play and pray in safety and acceptance.

## STRATEGY:

A Mental Health Friendly Congregations is...

***A Local Congregation committed to eliminating stigma and improving outcomes for African American consumers and family members through social and spiritual inclusion in the life and in all facets of its ministries and programs.***

Mental Health Friendly Congregations conducted five trainings at Family Bible Fellowship, Newark, Genesis Worship Center, Oakland, The Way Christian Fellowship, Berkeley, Allen Temple Baptist Church, Oakland and Acts Full Gospel Church of God in Christ, Oakland.. The congregations memberships total approximately 15,000 consumers and family members of all the demographic categories identified in the African American Utilization Report, - Children, Youth, Transition Aged Youth, Adults and Senior Adults in Alameda County. Field tests were conducted to measure the differences, strengths and nuances of congregational responsiveness based upon denominational affiliation, location and size. The responses to the field tests were reviewed and evaluated by the participating congregations, the Executive Team and the African American Issues Committee.

580 African American church members, consumers and family members participated in the five trainings. Attendees reported significant cultural, personal and congregational growth awareness and commitment to reducing stigma and improving outcomes within their families, communities and churches.

MHFC utilizes a four step process that is consistent with the Mission, Vision and Values of ACBHCS to “*make the behavioral health care system of care stronger, more accessible, and more self-sustainable*”, for the African American community.

The steps are:

- Consumer Engagement
- Clergy/Pastoral Engagement
- Congregational Engagement
- Community Collaboration and Engagement

## **STEP 1: Consumer Engagement**

The first step involves soliciting and including African American consumer and family member input and support. The primary organization focusing on the needs of African American consumers and family members in Alameda County is The African American Issues Committee of the Pool Of Consumer Champions. MHFC met extensively with the AAIC to invite members to provide direction and input regarding the components and contents of the training. Consistent with the POCC “Having our Say Report – Nothing About Us Without Us” – MHFC seeks to express the voice and needs of the African American Consumer. It is also critical to include consumers in the actual trainings. To reduce stigma and discrimination consumers are able to educate attendees by sharing their stories, successes and understanding of mental health and the role of faith in a way that empowers the consumer and engages the community to better understand and appreciate the consumer movement in Alameda County. The Pool Of Consumer Champions, Having Our Say, report recommended Mental Health Friendly Congregations as a training for consumers, family members and providers servicing the African American Community. Consumers must be engaged and included in all facets of this effort. The primary goal is to reduce stigma and to improve access to services and outcomes for consumers.

## **STEP 2: Clergy/Pastoral Engagement**

Data based on a statewide survey of mental health clients/consumers regarding Spirituality in 2010 conducted by the California Mental Health and Spirituality Initiative at the California Institute for Mental Health reports that, 88% of African American mental health consumers and family members across the state of California report that spirituality is important to them. Clergy see more people than psychologists and psychiatrists combined who have a Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders diagnosis come to them for assistance. MHFC engages pastors and congregations as vital stakeholders to create a welcoming community of faith that is a safe place for consumers and family members to receive support.

MHFC implements the following to solicit pastoral support:

- Identify and contact key pastors of congregations that are actively engaged in improving the conditions and challenges facing African Americans in Alameda County.
  - Identify and contact the leaders of African American denominational, ecclesiastical
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associations, jurisdictions or districts.

- Connect with Supervisor Keith Carson's, African American clergy and elected officials group.

The goal is to present an overview of MHFC to the pastors. The preferred forum is to gather as many pastors as possible during their regularly scheduled meetings. Pastors are given an opportunity to sign up for a one on one consultation with the MHFC Director, Pastor Jones to answer any questions and to address any concerns. Pastor Jones presents a more detailed presentation of how MHFC can potentially impact their congregation and community. Pastoral, buy in and support is essential to assess prior to progressing to the next step.

### **STEP 3: Congregational Engagement**

The ultimate goal of MHFC is to create congregations throughout Alameda County that are actively involved and committed to becoming a community of acceptance, compassion and empowerment for consumers and family members. Our motto is, "Eliminating Stigma and Improving Outcomes, One Congregation At A Time". We ask participating pastors to:

- Identify members in their congregation to develop a Mental Health Ministry
- The Mental Health Ministry will serve as the primary source of program development and implementation for their congregation.
- The MHFC staff will train the MH ministry team and provide the template for the programs' promotion, registration, training and evaluation.
- The MHFC staff will provide technical assistance for the MH team of each congregation in proportion to their capacity and need.
- Each MHFC commits to the MHFC Covenant – Attachment 1
- Participants in the training are solicited to identify the needs of their congregation for continued ongoing training and development.
- Each participating Congregations designates a resource table to display and offer mental health information, materials and resources available within the church and community.

Mental Health Friendly Congregations are committed to long term systemic growth that will

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impact and influence all ministries, programs and activities of the church.

#### **STEP4: Community Collaboration and Engagement**

MHFC is a conduit for connecting participating congregations to providers, consumers, ACBHCS and other stakeholders committed to improving outcomes for African Americans. The following organizations are partners committed to this project:

#### **KEY PARTNERS**

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- PEERS – Peers Engaging and Envisioning Recovery Services
- NAMI – National Alliance on Mental Illness of Alameda County
- POCC – Pool of Consumer Champions
- FERC – Family Educational Resource Center
- Bethsaida Counseling Center – Allen Temple Baptist Church
- Counseling and More – Tri Cities Community Center
- ACBHCS – Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services
- BMS - Black Men Speaks

Other partners are identified by each pastor located within their geographical area. They are invited to participate in the training event. Pastors are encouraged to meet with our partners to share resources and information to better serve their members and community. Partners are included in all correspondence and scheduling of training events. Participants are able to interact with all of our partners throughout the training. Families are encouraged to utilize the resources and information distributed relative to any personal or family need that occurs. Community events, trainings and programs that are available from our partners is promoted and disseminated throughout the MHFC family via email, facebook and web sites.

## KEY OUTCOMES

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1. Trained 5 Congregations to become Mental Health Friendly Congregations with an aggregate membership of 15,000 African Americans.
2. 580 consumers, family members and congregants representing the targeted population attended the training events.
3. Facilitated MHFC representing 5 different denominations.
4. Provided a means for connection the African American consumer movement with MHFC.
5. Collaborated with the key consumer, family and provider organizations in Alameda County.
6. Provided a means for connecting community stakeholders and providers with MHFC.
7. Identified by the African American Issues Committee of PEERS Social Inclusion Campaign as the priority program for the Legacy Building Project.
8. Cited by the Pool Of Consumer Champions, "Having Our Say", report as required training for members and providers servicing the African American community.

## ATTACHMENT 1

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### MHFC COVENANT COMMITMENT

The Pastor, leadership and members of Family Bible Fellowship commit to our members and community to....

- Develop A Mental Health Ministry
  - Host Regular Wellness Fireside Chats For Our Members And Community
  - Host Annual Mental Wellness Training
  - Will Recognize And Promote The State Week Of Prayer For Mental Wellness The First Week Of October
  - Will Recognize And Promote Mental Wellness Awareness Month
  - Utilize Mental Wellness Friendly Language In Our Teaching, Preaching And Ministries
  - Will Dedicate At Least One Message Annually To Mental Wellness
  - Foster, Cultivate And Develop Collaborative Relationship With Local Like Minded Organizations Committed To Promoting Mental Wellness In The African American Community
  - Will Incorporate Mental Wellness Training In Church Wide Events, Retreats And Workshops
  - Commit To Eliminating Stigma And Improving Outcomes For Consumers And Family Members Of (THE NAME OF THE MHFC)
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