

Focus Group Interview Guide

Goals:

1. *Understand priority mental health and substance use needs of stakeholders/priority populations*
2. *Perceptions of what resources and community strengths exist and challenges to accessing those resources.*
3. *Identify community strengths – areas of opportunity to meet behavioral health needs in innovative ways.*
4. *Understand successful community engagement for this group, including expectations around participation, feedback mechanisms, responsibility of BHS to the community?*

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to talk with us. We are very excited to be continuing this process of intentional community engagement to inform the ways in which Behavioral Health Services designs and implements mental health and substance use programming to meet the needs of our very diverse San Diego community. We acknowledge that there have been previous efforts toward engagement. Our commitment is entirely to authenticity and accountability in including community this process. And, to do that, we need to hear from those with experience in this field.

Our approach includes a community engagement process that is welcoming, inclusive, and aligned with other behavioral health related engagement activities. Today, we are here to specifically focus on the (*insert population*) community. We will ask some questions focused on helping us understand what you see as the strengths of your (*insert population*) community, some priority areas for mental health and substance use and resources, and how best to do ensure community voice can be successfully included in the ways in which San Diego BHS creates and implements its programs. The information collected as part of these groups will be shared with BHS as a summary blueprint that includes (*insert population*) behavioral health needs, assets, and recommendations.

Guidelines

1. We are encouraging verbal dialogue for this engagement session. To make sure everyone is heard we encourage you to use the hand raise option, so that each person is heard. Explain where this is.
2. Secondary, you can use the chat if you prefer. A team member will be monitoring the chat and we may very likely review the chat feedback and possibly ask for further follow up on responses in the chat.
3. We will be recording this session today so that notes can be used to inform the behavioral health community planning process.
4. Please try to remain on mute while you are not speaking to decrease background sounds.
5. Any questions before we begin?

Reminders

- o Participation in the focus group is voluntary.
- o It's all right to abstain from discussing specific topics if you are not comfortable.

- o All responses are valid—there are no right or wrong answers.
- o Please respect the opinions of others even if you don't agree.
- o Try to stay on topic; we may need to interrupt so that we can cover all the material.
- o Speak as openly as you feel comfortable.
- o Avoid revealing very detailed information about your personal health.
- o Help protect others' privacy by not discussing details outside the group.

As mentioned, so that we can be sure to capture everything that is shared, we will be recording this discussion. None of the information you share will be attached to your name in any way and the data will be anonymized before being used for research purposes The recording is to ensure that we are able to thoroughly listen and review later. We will start the recording now.

Ensure okay to start recording and GO!

INTRODUCTION: Let's take a minute to introduce ourselves to one another. Share your name, in what area of San Diego you live, and what brings you to this event today. If you are representing a community organization or group, what is the name of that group? (*Facilitator starts, then passes to F2, then F3, the just goes around the virtual room.*)

SECTION ONE: Priority mental health & substance use needs

1. We want to start with talking about the mental health and substance use needs of the (*insert population*) community before we ask you questions about your community's strengths. What would you say are the most pressing mental health concerns, right now, for your community?

Probes if needed:

- a. How have you become aware of these concerns in your community?
- b. To what degree are concerns being met?
- c. What actions have been taken to address these concerns?
- d. What actions should still be taken to address these concerns?
- e. What discussions has your community had about addressing housing for people with behavioral health issues?
- f. What discussions has your community had about how to best provide mental health services to people with serious mental illness and who are resistant or hesitant to enter treatment?

2. Similarly, what are the most pressing substance use concerns, right now, for your community?

Probes if needed:

- a. How have you become aware of these concerns in your community?

- b. To what degree are concerns being met?
- c. What actions have been taken to address these concerns?
- d. What actions should still be taken to address these concerns?
- e. What discussions has your community had about addressing substance overdose in San Diego County?

SECTION TWO: Community Strengths

- 3. What would you say are the strengths (*and/or assets*) of the (*insert population*) community that are important to hear when thinking about mental health and substance use needs?
 - a. *Probe if needed:* Could you think back to a time when the community utilized its strengths in collaboration with the County to attend to mental health and substance use needs?
- 4. What unique aspects of your community should the behavioral health system consider when thinking of the development of new programs and services for mental health and substance use?

SECTION THREE: Resources/Opportunities for Innovation

- 5. Reflecting on the past year, could you provide an example of mental health or substance use related services or resources that have been useful to you or people you know?
 - Probes if needed:*
 - a. Was this service or resource provided by the County?
 - b. Are there other behavioral health services or resources in your community that we should know about?
- 6. What would you say are the biggest challenges for your community when it comes to accessing behavioral health resources and services?
 - Probes if needed:*
 - a. are there examples of specific barriers in place for you or your community to access resources?
 - b. How have you or community members overcome, or adapted to, these barriers?
- 7. What kind of mental health and/or substance use services do you need to make sure you, your family, and the community are cared for?

Probe if needed:

- a. Do you have any recommendations for a specific mental health or substance use program or service that your community could benefit from? Perhaps you have envisioned an ideal program or have learned about a program offered in another community that you would want to be integrated into your program.
8. (*Skip if participants have not worked with BHS before*): Could you provide an example of behavioral health services that were culturally appropriate for your community or an example where behavioral health services were not culturally appropriate for your community?

SECTION FOUR: Outreach, Engagement, Expectations, & Accountability

9. What are some ways you think work best to successfully engage with your (*insert population*) communities?

Probes if needed:

- a. Where, in your experience, has this fallen short to date?
 - b. Are there specifics that would be helpful to know when engaging with this community in a culturally appropriate way?
10. What types of communications and messages should be used to gather your input for behavioral health?

Probe if needed:

- a. How would you like to learn about Behavioral Health Services initiatives, including programming and funding, and their responses to your community's needs?

SECTION FIVE: Wrap-Up

11. As we are wrapping up, were you able to share enough about your community behavioral health needs and recommendations?
12. Did the language we used about mental health and substance use make sense?
13. Is there anything else that is important for us to know related to your behavioral health and substance use concerns that we did not ask about today?