



## **Statewide Training, Education, Outreach, Communication, Engagement, and Advocacy**

### Overview:

Parents and Caregivers for Wellness, an MHSOAC funded project, utilized the project Coordinating Committee to develop the focus and the agenda for a series of parent driven and parent focused activities imbedded throughout the *38<sup>th</sup> Annual California Mental Health Advocates for Children and Youth (CMHACY) Conference*.

The decision to collaborate with the CMHACY conference was intended to leverage the longstanding membership of the organization. Since 1980, CMHACY has hosted an annual conference at Asilomar Conference Grounds in Pacific Grove, California. Attended by as many as 600 stakeholders – parents, youth, providers, school representatives, County agency leaders, state department officials, and legislative staff – the conference has provided a forum for policy development, spawned collaboration and partnerships among counties and providers, incubated state-wide parent and youth organizations, hosted nationally recognized speakers, and showcased cutting-edge clinical advances in work with youth and families for the past 38 years.

CMHACY Parent/Caregiver Focused Activities at a Glance

CMHACY Parent/Caregiver Component	Details:
Greeting/orientation session –	Tuesday: 2:00 to 2:30: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greeting</li> <li>• Orientation to CMHACY activities</li> <li>• Orientation to Parents and Caregivers for Wellness</li> </ul>
Preconference – Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning	Tuesday 2:30-4:00: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding Educational Rights: East Bay Children’s Law Offices</li> </ul> Wednesday 9:00-10:30: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parenting LGBTQ Youth: Rory O’Brien</li> </ul> Wednesday 10:30-noon: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocating for Your Family: Young Minds Advocacy</li> </ul>
Thursday workshop sessions:	Parents and Caregivers are welcome to attend any workshop that interests them. The following workshops have been identified by the CMHACY Parent/Caregiver Planning committee as being of special interest to parents/caregivers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Parent and Youth Fishbowl: Exploring Needs and Strengths Together</li> <li>• The Importance of Parent Engagement: Presented by parents with lived experiences.</li> <li>• Parent, Caregiver &amp; Family members: How did CMHACY do, and what will we do with the information? Focus group format.</li> </ul>
Networking and evening social activities – Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday	Parents and caregivers have access to a dedicated room on the conference grounds to relax and network at their convenience throughout the conference. Informal evening activities also occur in this room and include cards, board games, and art supplies.
Friday Parent Breakfast	Friday 7:30 to 8:30am: During the breakfast, parents and caregivers participate in a “Call to action” discussion. The discussion is led by legal advocates paired with parent partners from PC4W partner organizations.
Friday morning Policy Panels	8:30am to 11:30am: Parents and caregivers are encouraged to attend the Friday morning policy panels, which immediately follow the Parent Breakfast. The panels focus on the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crisis Services</li> <li>• Diversity/Equity in Care</li> </ul> Each panel includes government and private leaders, providers, youth, legal advocates and parents/caregivers. Audience members will have the opportunity to ask questions of the panelists.

#### Statewide Outreach, Engagement, and Communication:

Outreach to parents and caregivers began months before the conference. Announcements of the conference and “save the dates” were sent to the list serves of all of the partner organizations. As the parent and caregiver “components” and schedule were developed, this information was distributed through the ever-growing network of parents and caregivers.

Parents and caregivers were engaged from the moment they arrived at the pre-conference. The initial “pre-conference” activity was a welcome and the overview of the conference activities. The parents and caregivers in attendance were shown the “comfort” room and encouraged to use it whenever they needed a break from the pre-conference and conference activities. Parents and caregivers were found in the room throughout the conference, engaged in conversation or in competition during board games and games of cards. Parents also appreciated the snacks that were made available to them. Those who had hotel accommodations “off grounds” especially appreciated the dedicated space. Informal evening activities included networking opportunities with other conference attendees as well as a parent/caregiver organized dance, which was well attended by all conference attendees.

#### Statewide Training and Education:

The CMHACY pre-conference and conference included many opportunities for *Parents and Caregivers for Wellness* to provide training to parents and caregivers as well as those who provide services and supports to them.

Training and education designed for and by parents and caregivers is essential to improve the health and wellness of children and youth with mental health needs. During CMHACY, statewide training was developed in a manner that would be focused on parents and caregivers, but would also be informative to providers, policy makers, and youth. Topics were chosen by reviewing survey and key informant interviews collected prior to the conference. Although the workshops were developed to focus on parents and caregivers, they were open to all. The providers and policy makers who participated were given additional information on how they could support and engage families.

*Understanding Educational Rights* provided parents and caregivers with information about federal and state entitlements for special education and other supports and services available in the school setting. The workshop also provided resources for parents, caregivers, and providers.

*Parenting LGBTQ Youth* provided an overview of sexual identify and related terminology. The workshop was also designed to provide participants with a better understanding of the unique challenges and strengths in parenting an LGBTQ youth.

*Advocating for Your Family* provided parents and caregivers with information about federal and state entitlements for mental health care. The session also provided tips for advocating at the

individual and system level.

*A Parent and Youth Fishbowl: Exploring Needs and Strengths Together* combined youth and families in a discussion of sensitive topics including privacy and the use of psychotropic medications.

*The Importance of Parent Engagement: Presented by parents with lived experiences* was developed by experienced parent partners to educate providers, policy makers, and parents new to the concept of self-advocacy about the role of parents and caregivers in obtaining the most appropriate services and supports for themselves and the youth they care for.

PowerPoints and comments from each training session are attached.

#### Statewide Advocacy:

The statewide advocacy activities included throughout the CMHACY conference were guided by the results of the surveys gathered by *Parents and Caregivers for Wellness*. Additional activities took advantage of opportunities that presented themselves during the conference.

*Additional activities:* Parents and caregivers were able to advocate for themselves and other parents throughout the conference. For example, when attending workshops focused on providers and/or policy makers, the parents and caregivers in attendance provided their perspective on the topics discussed. An additional opportunity arose during the CMHACY Board meeting. Parents, caregivers, and others voiced the importance of engaging family members and youth in all CMHACY planning activities and advocated for “parent” seats on the CMHACY board.

*Parent, Caregiver & Family members: How did CMHACY do, and what will we do with the information? Focus group format.* This workshop was designed specifically for parents and caregivers to identify strengths and weaknesses of the conference and advocate for changes to future conferences.

*Friday Parent Breakfast:* A parent breakfast was held on the last morning of the conference. During the breakfast, parents and caregivers were given a more detailed explanation of the *Parents and Caregivers for Wellness* project and participate in a “Call to action” discussion focusing on how the project can support and supplement what they are currently doing as individuals. The discussion was led by legal advocates paired with parent partners from PC4W partner organizations.

*Friday Policy Panels:* The panels focus on the following topics:

- Crisis Services
- Diversity/Equity in Care

Parents and caregivers were incorporated into each policy panel to advocate for their needs and the needs of the youth they care for in each of these two topics. In addition, the parents on each panel were able to provide the other panelists with a real life perspective on the importance of developing a continuum of care that meets the diverse cultural and geographic needs across the state. Other panel participants included government and private leaders, educators, providers, youth, and legal advocates. Audience members, including additional parents and caregivers, had the opportunity to ask questions of the panelists.

*Parents and Caregivers for Wellness* will review the written and verbal feedback from parents and caregivers who attended various portions of the CMHACY pre-conference and conference and will use this information to establish local and statewide training and advocacy activities for both annual and multi-year periods. If you attended the CMHACY conference and have additional comments on this year's activities and/or future activities, please send your comments to: \_\_\_\_\_.