

Stanislaus County Behavioral Health & Recovery Services  
A Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Service Organization



# MHSA NEWSLETTER

Volume 3, Issue 3  
March 2009

**MARCH HIGHLIGHTS:**  
MHSA Programs Help People Keep Their Homes!

...a newsletter to share information about Stanislaus County's Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) programs with staff, consumers, stakeholders, other county departments and the community at large.

## THAT was MHSA!

Submitted by Lynn Bristow, Mental Health Clinician, Senior Access and Resource Team (SART)

"I have had an MHSA day" or "That was MHSA!" are familiar refrains here at Senior Access and Resource Team (SART). We are finding out that it is not the enriched staffing, ability to provide non-traditional support, or increased wrap-around funds that are transforming our service delivery system (although they definitely help!). It is our work with individual clients that seems to be making the biggest shift in how we do business and what we consider to be the business that we do. Let me provide you with an example.

Oastelle (not her real name) is an African-American female in her late fifties. She has a history of depression along with physical disabilities. She had a series of deaths in her family in a short period of time. Already depressed, she became even more so. Oastelle, once very active in the SART program, began to disengage, stopped attending groups, and her already cluttered, filled to the brim house became dirty and utterly overwhelming. There was what seemed like thousands of roaches crawling everywhere! When we visited her home we expected to find roaches crawling on us. Oastelle said these were, "...bold Modesto roaches, not tame Turlock ones!" Oastelle had an In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) worker who barely worked and finally left, leaving Oastelle with no help whatsoever, as she has no family in the area and very little support. Then, her apartment failed the annual Housing Authority Section 8 inspection. With the re-inspection date approaching, the landlord unwilling to spray the roaches or have the carpet cleaned, and making threats to evict Oastelle (along with some barely veiled racist remarks), SART decided to do what we do best -- support and care for our consumers!!

It took three to four staff members a day for three days to get Oastelle's apartment cleaned and ready for Housing Authority inspection. We wore grungy clothes; we scrubbed, moved furniture, cleaned behind the stove and fridge, and even shampooed the carpet. We also laughed a lot and made the work as fun as we could. Oastelle told us that when she saw we had covered her dishes with paper towels to avoid getting roach insecticide fogger on them, she knew how committed we were to her and her recovery. Oastelle was able to secure another IHSS provider with an increased awareness of the kind of help she deserved to have. Now, eight months later, Oastelle's apartment remains clean and nicely decorated. Oastelle's depression improved and she has not returned to her previous level of despair. She re-engaged with the SART program and started attending groups and other functions. Because she is more trustful of SART staff, Oastelle has learned to ask for help before things get out of control, allowing us to come alongside her as she deals with the issues of life, if needed.

This is one of the more dramatic examples of what we do at Senior Access and Resource Team. We do this in a smaller way every day, however. No matter how grungy the work, staff seems happiest when they can say, "THAT was MHSA!"

If you have questions or suggestions regarding MHSA, please forward them by I.D. mail or email to: Carol Jo Hargreaves, BHRS/Administration, e-mail: [chargrea@co.stancounty.com](mailto:chargrea@co.stancounty.com); Karen Hurley, BHRS/Administration, e-mail: [khurley@co.stancounty.com](mailto:khurley@co.stancounty.com)

The MHSA-CSS (Communicate, Share and Support) Meeting is held the 4th Monday of each month at 10:00 a.m. in the Redwood Room, 800 Scenic Drive (unless otherwise notified).



Sponsored by Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors

## MHSA Planning: Getting The Word Out!

Submitted by Karen Hurley, MFT, MHSA Planning Coordinator

When you receive an e-mail from the MHSA Planning and Implementation Team that starts out “We are happy to announce ...” do you ever wonder how many people were sent the message or whether the message is getting out to enough people? This one method of communication, we estimate, reaches well over 700 people and here is why that matters:

Mental Health Service Act requires that county mental health/behavioral health departments conduct stakeholder processes in order to receive MHSA funds. In keeping with that mandate, but also to carry out the spirit of the MHSA, three sizeable and comprehensive community planning processes have been conducted in Stanislaus County: Community Services and Supports (CSS), Workforce Education and Training (WET), and Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI). Since BHRS began its first community planning process in 2005, we have been learning how to be effective at initiating and maintaining communication with individuals who live in Stanislaus County. We are confident that stakeholder meetings throughout the county are central to reaching people when planning and implementation processes are underway. During WET and PEI planning, we learned that partnering with community-based organizations was most effective.

Newspapers throughout the county are used but primarily for official public notices. A lesson learned during CSS planning was that stakeholder meetings announced in newspapers go largely unnoticed.

Now, in our fifth year of MHSA planning we regularly have informational items that need to be announced or delivered to stakeholders around the County, and it would not be practical to hold a meeting or place an ad in newspapers. For these, we use the magical “e-mail” system! From my perspective ‘magical’ because it is delivered instantly (almost), it saves time (to be productive) and paper (trees)!!

A typical announcement includes information about key events in MHSA planning and implementation, for example: 1) the latest MHSA Plan or Report that has come out for 30-day review, 2) Plan approval announcement, 3) upcoming stakeholder or information meeting, or 4) announcement that the monthly MHSA Newsletter has arrived.

One hundred seventy-six (176) individuals in the community and over 400 BHRS staff receive emails from us. The list of recipients includes Mental Health Board members; Representative Stakeholder Steering Committee members, including consumers, family members, law enforcement, probation, social service agencies, faith-based organizations, family resource centers, consumers, family members; and many other stakeholders who have given us their contact information.

Not everyone has e-mail or likes to use it, so any stakeholder may request to receive information through the U.S. Postal Service, and a few people do receive postal service mailing.

We know many of the people who receive announcements have the practice of passing on the information to their teams, organizations, community, and other community contacts. How far does the community network reach? Judging from the calls, e-mails and growing participation of stakeholders, we estimate it is pretty extensive!

MHSA planning documents may be accessed at [www.stanislausmhsa.com](http://www.stanislausmhsa.com). If you would like to receive notifications from the MHSA Planning Office, please send contact information to [khurley@stancounty.com](mailto:khurley@stancounty.com) or [tgairbay@stancounty.com](mailto:tgairbay@stancounty.com)

## “Whatever It Takes”

Submitted by Trinidad Tarancon, CST II, CAS I, & The Health Mental Health Team



Eliana (not her real name), a woman diagnosed with severe mental illness, wheelchair bound with minimal support, and at risk of losing her Section 8 Housing certificate. Because she was unable to make necessary repairs to pass the mandatory inspection required by Section 8 Housing, anxiety, frustration, and hopelessness started to set in and Eliana reached out for our help. This is our story of “whatever it takes” to help someone at Health Mental Health Team.

On November 25, 2008, a co-worker Vicki Aja, MFT, and I went to Eliana’s home to go over the checklist of items she needed to complete in order to pass her Housing inspection. This checklist process had been going on for a few weeks and the Housing Authority no longer wanted to give extensions. We found there were still numerous items not completed. We faxed Eliana’s applications to MID CARES, PG&E CARE/FERA, AT&T and Universal Lifeline.

The security screen door was one item on the checklist that required more detailed work. Eliana was told by her landlord that it was her responsibility to fix the door. A deacon from a neighborhood church was delivering some groceries to Eliana and overheard us talking about the repairs the security door needed. He said, “Let me take a look at it. I am a retired carpenter, maybe I can help.” Arrangements were made with the deacon to fix the door.

The next task was to clean the carpets, as they were very soiled. We made arrangements to rent a hot steam cleaner and purchase shampoo. We took the carpet steamer and shampoo to Eliana’s house. Eliana would clean the carpets by 1:00 p.m. When I arrived at Eliana’s home around 12 noon she said, “The carpets are beautiful.” You could visibly see Eliana was emotionally touched by how much we accomplished that day. It was not only a very productive day, but also a powerful day for Eliana and Health Mental Health Team because we worked together as a team.