

**Older Adult Committee, Santa Clara County Mental Health Board
Annual Report, February 2011**

Mission Statement:

To foster an increased awareness regarding mental health needs of older adults residing in Santa Clara County.

To advocate for comprehensive, integrated accessible, culturally competent, and innovative services for older adults.

To encourage, foster and support staff development regarding evidence-based practices and methods for geriatric mental health.

Vision Statement: The Older Adult Committee's Vision for a system of mental health for older adults is:

A thriving older adult division of the Mental Health Department, that delivers services from a foundation of evidence based practices throughout the entire system of mental health care.

A system in which the professionals delivering services experience their work as stimulating, rewarding and creative.

A system where older adults have access to culturally competent, effective and comprehensive treatment and service, where interventions are community oriented and occur at the earliest point of need.

The population of adults 60 and over, the so-called "Baby Boomers" is the fastest growing population in the U.S. as well as in Santa Clara County. By 2030 the older adult population will grow to almost 25% of the overall population in Santa Clara County. The older adult non-white population will also exceed the white population many of whom speak English as a second language. If depression is not treated in the older adult population, it will be the number one killer of older adults. The suicide rate among older adults is higher than any other age group. Substance abuse, including medications, is a growing problem in this population. A major concern is older adults who are homebound and isolated without family assistance.

With this in mind, the Older Adults Committee of the Santa Clara County Mental Health Board has discussed why there is such a lack of programs targeting older adult, specifically those in prevention and early intervention. It was explained that they were combined with adult prevention programs. However, it has been the contention that older adults receive the "tail end" of services in these programs due to the lack of training of mental health social workers in geriatric treatment. (questionable conclusion) Statistics show that the number mental health clients over 60 increased by 25% in 2009 Budgeting for Older Adults of Santa Clara County Mental Health in MHSA programs has been only 15% of the Adult Older Adult funds and only 4.2% of the overall programs.

In light of these facts, the Older Adults Committee advocated for more funding specifically for older adult programs. We participated in Stakeholders meetings, critiqued the Older Adult Innovative Program and had several meetings with staff and Dr. Pena questioning the feasibility of the implementation of this program. Because the essence of this program could

not be changed we are still trying to design a proposal that can work. This is the only older adult specific program, which could reach out to isolated elders thereby classifying it as a prevention program.

We had guest speakers such as Sarah Triano, Executive Director of the Silicon Valley Independent Living Center, who spoke about “Money Follows the Person,” a program which will assist mental health clients to leave institutions such as IMD’s.

We promoted dialogue between the Department of Aging and Mental Health which eventually entered an agreement to provide a mental health social worker to work at Adult Protective Services. The social worker will make mental health assessments.

With the encouragement of Dr. Pena and the Mental Health Board, our committee went to the Board of Supervisors to discuss the mental health needs of Older Adults in August 2010. In November, our committee met with Supervisor Dave Cortese to follow up our August meeting. He agreed to have a summit/conference to bring agencies, faith based communities, families, senior centers, the medical community, Alzheimer’s Association, Council on Aging, the Department of Aging, the Aging Services Collaborative, the Family Caregiver Alliance and others, to participate in collaborating to assist, prevent and educate families and isolated seniors from becoming depressed.

Supervisor Cortese, stated in his State of the County Address in January, 2011, “An area I plan to work on personally is to document and respond to the growing mental health issues of seniors. My office will work with members of the mental health board to put on the county’s first summit on the mental health care needs of our senior population. We will use the information from this summit to make recommendations on how to address the growing mental health crisis.

Our MHAB meetings have encouraged more participation and our attendance has increased markedly. In the past 6 months a proposal for outreach to older adults has been offered. Although it has yet to be implemented, but hopefully until the end of this fiscal year it will be through Prevention and Early Intervention funds..

Another program using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy will be piloted by Dr. Dolores Gallagher Thompson from the Stanford School of Medicine in collaboration with the Gronowski Clinic at Palo Alto University and the Aging Adult Services Program at Stanford Hospital & Clinics, to treat older adults who suffer from depression. It will also treat older adults who have early dementia/Alzheimer’s disease. Dr. Thompson will also implement another program to train social workers in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for depression.

We are quite pleased with the progress of meeting our mission (above) and hopefully will reach our vision. We will continue to support presentations by programs outside of mental health that deal with older adults, such as Family Care Alliance and the Alzheimer’s Association to make presentations. Next month’s presentation will be by, the Suicide Prevention Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Wesley K. Mukoyama L.C.S.W.
Older Adults Committee Chair
Santa Clara County Mental Health Board