



Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services WELCOMING TOOLKIT

What is the Welcoming Toolkit?

The Welcoming Toolkit builds upon the work of the Co-Occurring Conditions Steering Committee to develop the Welcoming Policy for BHCS. This project was created collaboratively by Quality Improvement Team members, utilizing their extensive work and expertise with three BHCS initiatives: Co-Occurring Conditions, Cultural Responsiveness, and Wellness, Recovery & Resiliency. Additionally, provider input from across all four Systems of Care and Substance Use Disorders played a significant role in the development of the toolkit's content.

Providers are offered a collection of practical, no-cost, and low-cost ways to integrate welcoming practices into daily operations. The toolkit is designed as a menu of welcoming practices from three categories:

- ◇ What I experience when I come into the program
- ◇ How staff makes me feel welcome
- ◇ How paperwork and procedures support my wellness

A group of Quality Improvement team members, BHCS staff, and volunteer Change Agents have teamed up to rollout the Welcoming Toolkit and provide technical assistance regarding content and implementation. For additional information, please contact the following QI team members:

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TOOLKIT SECTION #1: What I Experience When I Come into the Program

A welcoming physical environment and greeter sets a positive tone for what clients/consumers and family members experience upon entering the program.

Here are some practices to choose from:

- ◇ A greeter is present, engaging and authentic. (may also be a client/consumer or family member)
- ◇ Lobby or hallways have short photo essays of clients/consumers that have transitioned from this program back into the community (photo essays are written by clients and displayed with the client's approval)
- ◇ Décor reflects the colors, textiles, and images of cultural/ethnic populations served by program. Lobby feels like a living room. Artwork is warm, inviting; not nailed or glued down.
- ◇ My appointment is on time. If there is a wait, the greeter lets me know when I will be seen (respect for the client's time).
- ◇ Program security is unobtrusive (i.e. physical barriers only as necessary, no bullet-proof glass or metal detectors)
- ◇ The program has a place for children to play with appropriate, sanitary toys.
- ◇ Seating is comfortable, inviting colors and in good condition (chairs and couches).
- ◇ Plants are watered and healthy.
- ◇ Access to clean restrooms (not locked) that are in waiting area or close by.
- ◇ Water is available (Hot & cold water dispenser with cups & tea bags; or water fountain).
- ◇ Inexpensive and healthy snacks available from a vending machine.

- ◇ Lobby is welcoming to family members and friends that may come with the clients/consumers (i.e., pictures of clients with loved ones, brochures about supporting loved ones, greeter acknowledges everyone who comes with the client)
- ◇ Magazines are current and reflect the interests, culture and language of clients/consumers and family members who come to the clinic.
- ◇ All brochures and fact sheets are written in easy to understand language. They are translated into the languages of people who come to the agency (at minimum reflect the county threshold languages); are well organized and pleasing in color and design.

[Here are some examples of brochures and fact sheets](#) that have useful information for clients and family members:

- i. Wellness education classes (mental health and co-occurring conditions) on-site and in the community (i.e. 12 step programs, WRAP, Bi-polar Anonymous, Nicotine Anonymous, and California Smokers' Helpline)
- ii. Calendar of free community events - including multi-cultural events
- iii. Resource list "Where to get basic needs met": health (access to health care with free or sliding fee scales); food (local food banks and free meal programs); clothing (addresses of Salvation Army, Good Will stores); shelter (public shelters, affordable housing and/or rent subsidies) ;
- iv. Volunteer and paid work opportunities
- v. "I want to go back to school"
- vi. "I want to work again"
- vii. Fact sheets for families about maintaining resilience and hope when facing mental health challenges (including community resources)
- viii. Contact information for community classes with no-fee or sliding fee scales for physical health, meditation, 12 step, yoga, nutrition, cooking).
- ix. Psychiatric symptoms/diagnoses (written compassionately using lay-language).
- x. Facts about Co-occurring challenges
- xi. Facts about managing physical health when taking psychiatric medications
- xii. Facts about tobacco-use and tobacco dependence treatment.
- xiii. Display Brochures promoting the California Smokers' Helpline and/or flyers promoting Tobacco Cessation Services available.

TOOLKIT SECTION #2: How Staff Makes Me Feel Welcome

The following section offers useful suggestions for providers, program staff and peers to enhance welcoming, support, and resource skills in their work with clients/consumers and family members:

- ◇ Staff genuinely acknowledges clients/consumers and family members.
 - Eye contact with a smile, hello or other compassionate gesture.
 - "My name" is used by staff.
 - Someone offers me a seat or a drink

- ◇ Some staff "look like me" and speak my language

- ◇ Staff knows how to effectively share stories of "lived experience" with respect to different paths of recovery.

- ◇ Staff uses the framework and language of motivational interviewing to build relationships.

- ◇ Staff is skillful in recognizing and responding to needs of clients/consumers from cultures, linguistic backgrounds, and gender/sexual orientation different from their own. Staff has done self-reflective work that helps them communicate with diverse cultural groups in adaptive, respectful and non-judgmental ways.

- ◇ Staff is skillful in providing supports to family and have brochures to share that describe useful community resources.

- ◇ Staff skillfully communicate with clients/consumers and family members about their spiritual beliefs. Staff knows how to support clients/consumers to explore spiritual practices that support well-being. Staff is skillful in connecting clients with spiritual resources (if requested).

- ◇ Staff is my ally (not my caretaker):
 - i. Staff communicate to me that "we are here to walk with you as you learn, listen to you, support you in your choices, support you in learning how to manage your challenges, and support you in connecting with people who are traveling the same path".

- ii. Staff is skillful in encouraging clients/consumers and family members to take on new challenges; and support them when trying new things that seem out of their reach.
- iii. Staff asks "You have developed skills that have helped you get to where you are today - what are they?"
- iv. Staff makes space for me to explain my gifts and strengths and figure out how to use them to work through my challenges. "I am part of the solution."
- v. Staff welcomes me no matter what shape I'm in when I show up.
- vi. Individuals and families with co-occurring issues are welcomed for care. "I wasn't turned away if I was using."

◇ Staff partners with me on my treatment/wellness planning:

- i. Staff begins with a conversation designed to get to know the client/consumer. Opening conversation focuses on the resiliency and skills the individual has used to manage their life. The individual is engaged as a whole person.
- ii. Staff uses intake and assessment procedures that are respectful and supportive while gathering required Medi-Cal information on mental health issues (including trauma), substance use issues (including tobacco), medical issues, basic social needs. Questions are answered without using a clipboard.
- iii. Staff develops Wellness Plans that are written using the clients/consumers and family members' language to describe their goals, recent successes, strengths and challenges.
- iv. Staff assists clients/consumers to explore options and set their own life goals and strategies.
- v. Staff uses a Wellness-Planning process that supports clients/consumers to manage their own psychiatric treatment.
- vi. Staff offers enough information about risks and benefits of various treatment options so that clients/consumers can give informed consent, when required.
- vii. Staff is skillful in acknowledging how family members and/or friends are part of the support system and supporting collaboration.

TOOLKIT SECTION #3: How Paperwork and Procedures Support Me in My Wellness

As paperwork can be overwhelming for clients/consumers, Section Three provides the following procedural recommendations to make the process more welcoming:

- ◇ When completion of assessment or other paperwork is a priority, procedures are in place to not “bombard clients and family members with paperwork” by:
 - i. Engaging clients and family members as people first;
 - ii. Gauge readiness to answer formal questions;
 - iii. Ask questions in ways that are as personal and engaging as possible;
 - iv. Identify ways to complete required paperwork over the course of more than one session, if necessary.

- ◇ A clearly written grievance policy is available to give to clients/consumers if rights are violated.

- ◇ Procedures are in place to help me access housing, benefits, primary health care and self-help groups for me and my family.

