



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 that developed a Welcoming Policy for Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services (BHCS). This project translates that Welcoming Policy into practical, no-cost, and low-cost ways to integrate welcoming practices into daily operations.

The Welcoming Toolkit was created collaboratively by BHCS Quality Improvement Team members, building upon their experience with three BHCS initiatives: Co-Occurring Conditions, Cultural Responsiveness, and Wellness, Recovery & Resiliency. The BHCS Quality Improvement team worked closely with providers from all four Systems of Care and BHCS Substance Use Disorder programs to develop the Toolkit's content.

The Toolkit's Welcoming Practices are presented in a menu format and are organized into three sections:

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

We encourage you to look through all three sections with your staff, then "check-off" and try-out welcoming practices that are easy to implement in your program. As you read through the Toolkit, you may notice that your program already uses some of the Welcoming Practices. For practices that appear more challenging, please contact the BHCS Quality Improvement team. We are here to listen and to help.

- ◇ Margaret Walkover - Content Support
(510) 383-1781 mwalkover@acbhcs.org
- ◇ Sean Jara - Technical Support
(510) 383-1776 sjara@acbhcs.org



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

A welcoming physical environment and greeter makes the experience of entering the program more comfortable for clients/consumers and family members. Check boxes are provided for the practices you're interested in implementing. (1 of 3)

We're

Interested:

- 1) A greeter is present, engaging and authentic. The greeter may be a provider, client/consumer or family member.
- 2) The lobby or hallways have short photo essays of clients/consumers who have transitioned from this program back into the community. Photo essays are written by clients displayed with the client's approval.
- 3) 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.
- 4) If people have to wait for appointments, the greeter communicates when they will be seen (respect for the client's time).
- 5) Program security is unobtrusive (i.e. physical barriers only as necessary, no bullet-proof glass or metal detectors).
- 6) Lobby is welcoming to family members and friends who may come with clients/consumers (i.e. pictures of the clients' loved ones, brochures about supporting loved ones, greeter acknowledges everyone who comes with the client).
- 7) The program has a place for children to play with appropriate, sanitary toys.
- 8) Seating is comfortable (chairs and couches) with inviting colors and in good condition.

Notes and Next Steps:



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

A welcoming physical environment and greeter makes the experience of entering the program more comfortable for clients/consumers and family members. Check boxes are provided for the practices you're interested in implementing. (2 of 3)

We're

Interested:

- 9) Plants are watered and healthy.
- 10) Easy access to clean restrooms (in waiting area or close by) that are not locked.
- 11) Lobby has a water fountain or hot/cold water dispenser with cups & tea bags.
- 12) Inexpensive and healthy snacks available from a vending machine.
- 13) Magazines are current and reflect the interests, culture and language of clients/consumers and family members who come to the program/clinic.
- 14) 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, pleasing in color and design.
- 15) Some examples of brochures & fact sheets clients/consumers and family members will appreciate finding in your lobby:
 - a. Wellness education classes (mental health and substance use) offered on-site and in the community. (i.e. 12 step programs, Wellness Recovery Action Planning, Bi-polar Anonymous, Nicotine Anonymous)
 - b. Calendar of free community events - including multi-cultural events.

Notes and Next Steps:



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

A welcoming physical environment and greeter makes the experience of entering the program more comfortable for clients/consumers and family members. Check boxes are provided for the practices you're interested in implementing. (3 of 3)

We're

Interested:

- c. Contact information for community classes with no-fee or sliding fee scales (i.e. primary care, meditation, yoga, cooking).
- d. Resource list "Where to get basic needs met": health (access to health care with free or sliding scales); food (local food banks and free meal programs); clothing (addresses of Salvation Army, Goodwill Stores); shelter (local shelters, affordable housing, and/or rent subsidies).
- e. Volunteer and paid work opportunities.
- f. "I want to go back to school."
- g. "I want to work again."
- h. Fact sheets for families about maintaining resilience and hope when facing mental health challenges (including community services).
- i. Fact sheets about psychiatric symptoms/diagnosis.
- j. Fact sheets about Co-Occurring challenges.
- k. Tips on managing physical health when taking psychiatric medications.
- l. Fact sheets about tobacco use and tobacco dependence treatment, including brochures describing the California Smokers' Helpline or flyers describing available Tobacco Cessation Services.

Notes and Next Steps:



TOOLKIT SECTION #2: How Staff Makes Me Feel Welcome

This section suggests skills and strategies that help clients/consumers and family members connect well with staff. These approaches create relationships that may help clients/consumers, family members and providers feel more comfortable, safe, and authentic. Check boxes are provided for the practices you're interested in implementing. (1 of 3)

We're

Interested:

- 1) Staff 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.
- 2) Some staff "look like me" and speak my language.
- 3) Staff knows how to effectively share stories of "lived experience" to validate the recovery experiences of clients/consumers and family members.
- 4) Staff uses the framework and language of motivational interviewing to build relationships.
- 5) Staff is skillful in recognizing and responding to needs of clients/consumers and family members from cultures, linguistic backgrounds, and gender/sexual orientations 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.
- 6) Staff is skillful in providing supports to family and have brochures to share that describe useful community resources.
- 7) Staff skillfully communicate with clients/consumers and family members about their spiritual beliefs. Staff know how support clients/consumers to explore spiritual practices that support well-being. Staff is skillful in connecting clients with spiritual resources (if requested).

Notes and Next Steps:



TOOLKIT SECTION #2: How Staff Makes Me Feel Welcome

This section suggests skills and strategies that help clients/consumers and family members connect well with staff. These approaches create relationships that may help clients/consumers, family members and providers feel more comfortable, safe, and authentic. Check boxes are provided for the practices you're interested in implementing. (2 of 3)

We're

Interested:

8) Staff is my ally (not my caretaker):

- a. 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 connecting with people traveling the same path."
- b. Staff is skillful in encouraging clients/consumers and family members to take on new challenges; and offer support when people try new things that seem out of their reach.
- c. Staff asks "you have developed skills that have helped you get to where you are today...what are they?"
- d. 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."
- e. Staff welcomes me, no matter what shape I'm in when I show up.
- f. Individuals and families with co-occurring issues are welcomed for care. "I wasn't turned away if I was using."

Notes and Next Steps:



TOOLKIT SECTION #2: How Staff Makes Me Feel Welcome

This section suggests skills and strategies that help clients/consumers and family members connect well with staff. These approaches create relationships that may help clients/consumers, family members and providers feel more comfortable, safe, and authentic. Check boxes are provided for the practices you're interested in implementing. (3 of 3)

We're

Interested:

9) Staff partners with me on my treatment/wellness planning:

- a. Staff begins the conversation by getting to know the client/consumer or family member. Opening conversation focuses on the resiliency and skills the individual has used to manage their life. The individual is engaged as a whole person.
- b. 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 disorders, medical issues, and basic social needs. Questions are answered without using a clipboard.
- c. Staff develops Wellness Plans that are written using the clients/consumers and family members' language to describe their goals, successes, strengths, and challenges.
- d. Staff assists clients/consumers and family members to explore options and set their own life goals and strategies.
- e. Staff supports clients/consumers and family members to work with their doctors to understand and manage their own psychiatric treatment. (adults and older adults)
- f. Staff offers enough information about risks and benefits of various treatment options so that clients/consumers and family members can give informed consent.
- g. Staff is skillful in acknowledging how family members and/or friends are part of the support system and supporting collaboration.

Notes and Next Steps:



TOOLKIT SECTION #3: Paperwork and Procedures Support My Wellness

Paperwork can be overwhelming for clients/consumers, family members, and providers. This section offers ways to make paperwork and procedures (and the process of completing them) more welcoming. Check boxes are provided for practices you're interested in implementing.

(1 of 1)

We're

Interested:

- 1) Procedures are in place to avoid "bombarding clients/consumers and family members with paperwork" as they enter the program.
 - a. Engage clients/consumers and family members as people first.
 - b. Gauge readiness to answer formal questions.
 - c. Ask questions in ways that are personal and engaging as much as possible.
 - d. If possible, identify ways to complete required paperwork over the course of more than one session.
- 2) If rights are violated, a clearly written grievance policy is available to give to clients/consumers and family members.
- 3) Procedures are in place to help clients/consumers and family members access any combination of housing, benefits, primary health care and self-help groups.
- 4) Staff are offered stress reduction skills to use between sessions with clients/consumers and family members, after completing paperwork, or implementing procedures.

Notes and Next Steps: