CalMHSA
Overview of African-American Spirituality Initiative

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Faith and Mental Wellness – Partnering for Success

"Faith is rooted in the traditions, beliefs and values of most cultures. It shapes world views and provides an important way for people in the community to come together and receive information. When experiencing mental illness, people often return to their faith-based roots for support to understand their illness. Faith-based initiatives offer great opportunities for organizations to partner with institutions of faith to share information with parishioners on recovery and resiliency for overall wellness."

Ohio Department of Mental Health

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- JIM HILL– President, Hill & Company Communications; more than 30 years marketing communications and social marketing experience; former Vice President-Communications Kaiser Permanente, CEO of Burrell Public Relations, Chicago.
- NINA GREENWOOD – Project Lead, Hill & Company Communications; marketing communications, direct marketing and product management experience in for-profit and not-for-profit organizations; former Director of Marketing at Brighter Beginnings and Children's Hospital & Research Center, Oakland.
- LINDA GOLDSMITH, MPH – Program Manager, Hill & Company Communications; extensive experience in marketing communications, strategic planning and social marketing with an emphasis on health and wellness; former Director of Planning, California Pacific Medical Center, San Francisco, and Director of Marketing, Telecare Corporation, Alameda.

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- PASTOR HORACIO S. JONES – Senior Pastor, Family Bible Fellowship, Newark, CA and President/CEO Tri Cities Community Development Center. Creator of concept of "Mental Health-Friendly Congregations."
- MINISTER MONIQUE TARVER – Mental Health and Spirituality Trainer/Wellness Educator and Co-Chair of the CA Statewide Mental Health and Spirituality Initiative.
- GIGI R. CROWDER, L.E. – Ethnic Services Manager, Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services and facilitator of Alameda County's *African American Utilization Report.*

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+ Understanding the Issues

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- To better understand the cultural nuances of stigma and discrimination in the African-American community, and to identify best practices, potential partners and solidify our strategic direction, Hill & Company assembled extensive resources and information:
  - Conducted informational interviews with individuals and organizations throughout the state including:
    - Mental health professionals
    - Community based organizations
    - Partners from the CalMHSA project team
    - Faith leaders
    - Individuals with lived experience of mental illness
  - Performed literature reviews of key studies and background materials
  - Brainstormed strategic communications approaches to address issues

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+ Key Findings

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- Rather than relying on the mental health system to address their needs, many African Americans draw support from faith, family and communities.
  - 88% of African-American consumers and family members agree or strongly agree that "spirituality is important to me/my family member's mental health." – *CA Mental Health & Spirituality Initiative Consumer and Family Survey, 2010*
- We heard repeatedly that "harnessing the power of the faith community" for delivering messages of support, education and hope is the most effective way to address stigma and discrimination for African Americans.

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+ Initiative Objective

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- To reduce stigma and discrimination related to mental health challenges among African Americans through an inclusive faith-based initiative that creates ***"mental health-friendly communities"*** and identifies local resources to sustain them.
- To become a "Mental-Health Friendly Community," participating churches, must complete four distinct training modules and create a team of committed church members to oversee program implementation and ongoing practices.
- County Mental Health agencies and CBO's will also participate in appropriate trainings and partner with churches and faith-based organizations to support community wellness.

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Training	Audience	Description
Mental Health 101	Pastors/ Ministers	Broadens the competency of spiritual/faith leaders as first responders to mental health crises, and inspires leaders to create welcoming communities for individuals and families living with mental health challenges. Corrects misinformation and educates faith leaders to recognize signs and symptoms and provide better support for those with mental health concerns.
Spirituality 101	Mental Health Providers	Builds understanding among mental health and allied health professionals of the important role of faith in mental health care for African-American consumers and families. Focuses on how to include spirituality as a resource for wellness, recovery and multicultural competency. Also facilitates development of a provider network to partner with the faith community in addressing specific needs of African Americans.
Keepers of the Flock	Pastors/clergy, mental health service providers consumers, family members, community stakeholders	Incorporates appropriate elements of all trainings to provide a rationale for the need to support and respect the individual choice to include faith/spirituality in wellness and recovery planning. This training serves to provide context for any community caregiver committed to effectively supporting the wellness recovery journey of those living with mental health issues.
A Bridge Over Troubled Waters	CBOs/ Providers/ Churches	Provides a historical perspective of the role that faith fulfills within the African-American experience. This training provides perspective as to why the roots of faith run so deep within the African American Community and has been identified as a source of healing; instrumental in maintaining personal and community mental wellness.

Pilot Communities

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- Four communities were selected to pilot the Spirituality Initiative, including:
  - Solano
  - Fresno
  - Sacramento
  - San Bernardino/Riverside
- These communities contain some of the largest populations of African Americans in the state, cover a broad geographical area and have faith and community leaders willing to develop strategic alliances for a sustainable stigma reduction initiative.

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Discussion/Next Steps

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