

Tri-City Mental Health Services

Claremont Area League of Women Voters Observer Report

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(former Tri-City Board Member)

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Tri-City Mental Health Services is a Joint Powers public agency serving the cities of Pomona, Claremont, and La Verne.

Established in 1960, it is a comprehensive mental health service provider, dedicated to helping families and individuals of all ages reach their full potential. Through dedicated collaboration with all three communities it has created an integrated system of care that ensures access and enhances mental and emotional health. Available services include psychotherapy, clinical case management, medication support, peer-to-peer support, psychoeducation, linkage and referral, vocational training and support, socialization activities, and community outreach. This program meets the local League of Women Voters adopted policy position for support of mental health services, available to all. The LWV position emphasizes the importance of integrated client services, adequately funded from public and/or private funds to service a growing population with increasingly unmet needs.

The seven members of the Governing Board of Directors are comprised of elected city officials and residents from the three cities. Pomona is represented by City Council members Rubio Ramiro Gonzalez and Elizabeth Ontiveros-Cole, and by Edina Martinez, PsyD, a Pomona resident. La Verne is represented by Robin Carder who is Chair of the Board and Carolyn Cockrell, both of whom are City Council members. Claremont's directors are Joe Lyon, Ph.D. and a City Council member and Ron Vera, a Claremont resident. Three of the members are new to the Board. Ron Vera's family has been active in Tri-City programs and has participated in NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) activities.

There is also a Mental Health Commission made up of nine residents, including several clients, that reviews and evaluates policies and procedures and advises the Board. These groups meet approximately

once a month in separate meetings, have joint meetings twice a year and culminate the fiscal year with a state-mandated Yearly Update process with a meeting attended by over one hundred residents, service providers and stakeholders.

Funded by the Mental Health Services Act (Prop 63 or the Millionaires' Tax Act) in Nov 2004. \$18.7 million a year are provided to this agency for its work. There are approximately 159 Full-time employees.

The agency also works with various health insurance programs to provide access to the residents including United HealthCare, Kaiser, Medicare and MediCal, but uninsured or inadequately insured residents are not turned away. Clients must be residents of the three cities in order to receive services.

215,000 people live in the 3 communities of La Verne, Pomona and Claremont. The Tri-City area is 26% white, 56% Latino, 9% Asian Pacific Islander and 5.9% African American. Population in poverty ranges from 15% in Claremont to 54% in Pomona.

In addition to continuing mental health clinical services in our communities, 2016-17 projects included construction and opening Permanent Supportive Housing in several areas of Pomona as well as a small unit in Claremont, and a volunteer Peer Mentoring Program that saw 24 peer mentors trained in 2015.

The programs are provided in three main buildings. The administrative offices are in Claremont, north of the High School at 1717 Indian Hill Blvd. Clinical services are provided in Pomona at 2008 N. Garey Ave. and Community Services are provided at a Wellness Center at 1403 N. Garey Ave. Additional services are provided at offices at 1900 Royalty Dr. in Pomona.

Approximately 1500 unduplicated clients are enrolled in formal services. In addition, there were over 3000 persons of all ages participating in the over 22,000 events, classes, and activities at the Wellness Center. Community Navigators provide many initial contacts with persons referred for services.

The cost for services ranges from \$76 to \$22,000 per person and is provided free of charge.

Meetings generally consist of reports from Staff members, including statistics reflecting services provided, staff issues, funds disbursed or available. Sometimes contracts are discussed such as construction or equipment purchases. Significant actions this past year include construction of permanent supportive housing, implementation of additional programs at the Wellness Center, the approval of new salary schedules for staff, revision of personnel handbooks, and evaluation of existing and proposed programs especially regarding funding and staffing. Staffing is a continuing challenge with 17% turnover at all levels. This is true apparently for most agencies of the same kind.

Quoting a LWV value....“The agency is following good government standards. It operates transparently, welcomes public input, and members appear well prepared.”

Conclusion-This agency is far better managed and equipped to fulfill the mental health needs of the three communities than the preceding agency that had the same name. More residents are being cared for and Tri-City seems more agile in responding to needs of the clients from the cities it serves. This service is almost completely dependent on the money raised from Prop 63. Any attempts to remove even a portion of the funding will have severe and negative consequences on the ability to serve the mental health needs of the residents of Claremont, Pomona and La Verne. There are still residents who need to be introduced to these services and that is an ongoing and bigger challenge to Tri-City and the cities it serves.