

## **Butte County – Your Mind Matters**

### Overview

Working together, the Butte County Library (BCL) and Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) provided access to essential mental health resources while reducing the stigmatization of mental illness.

### Challenge

Staff at BCL had observed that some library users exhibited disruptive behaviors that might be tied to severe mental illness or substance abuse. Employees and volunteers at the busy library system were feeling ill-equipped for responding to the disruptions that impacted library safety. They also wanted to make the library more welcoming for all individuals experiencing mental health challenges.

### Innovative Solution

BCL and DBH identified, applied for, and were awarded a competitive grant through the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian. Various components of the grant project gave the departments the opportunity to address not just the behavioral challenges, but also engage the community around mental health and provide better resources.

The first component of the grant was a full-day training, looking at problem scenarios and providing BCL staff/volunteers an overview of mental health issues, stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness and resources. DBH brought in Butte County NAMI (National Alliance for the Mentally Ill) and Each Mind Matters to further enhance the impact, with presentations from individuals who have lived experience with mental illness. Next, BCL and DBH selected high-quality, up-to-date library resources on critical topics. Then DBH connected BCL with local organizations/experts who offered a wide range of library programs helping the community at-large to become more aware of mental health challenges, resources, and the need to reduce stigmatization. Finally, the project increased library access to those living with mental illness. DBH clinicians were able to make library cards onsite for their clients and some clients were able to become BCL volunteers.

## **Butte County – Your Mind Matters**

### Originality

The BCL/DBH partnership is the first of its kind in a rural area. In part due to this project's success, the California State Library and the California Library Association will invest grant monies, conference training time, and professional resource development into similar projects in the upcoming fiscal year. The California State Library established a Mental Health Advisory Committee to develop statewide resources for libraries and communities; the exemplary Butte County project was chosen for a workshop at the 2016 California Library Association annual conference.

### Cost Effectiveness

The program was successful without expending any County funds, supported fully through a federal Library Services and Technology Act grant.

### Results

The 73 BCL staff and volunteers who attended training reported increased knowledge and confidence, as well as a positive attitude towards serving this population through the library. BCL purchased about 500 new library items with total circulation at over 1500 check-outs after only five months. 86% of borrowers indicated that these items helped them improve their or their family's health and wellness. The library presented 44 programs reaching over 400 community members, 3/4 of whom indicated that the activity helped their health and wellness. 7 out of 10 of attendees also reported they would feel more comfortable talking about mental health with people they knew, an important indicator of reduced stigma. Well over 2/3 of program participants identified that they or someone close to them lived with a mental health challenge.

### Project or Program Contact

Sarah Vantrease, Assistant Director, Butte County Library, 1820 Mitchell Ave., Oroville, CA 95966 530.282.2352 [svantrease@buttecounty.net](mailto:svantrease@buttecounty.net) and Jeremy Wilson, Program Manager, Butte County Behavioral Health, 109 Parmac Road, Chico, CA 95926 530.891.2850 [jwilson@buttecounty.net](mailto:jwilson@buttecounty.net)