

Mental Health, Spirituality, & Religion

Spirituality and religion are important to health and mental health and should be included in - not excluded from - healthcare services that strive to be holistic and culturally competent. The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health has heard for many years from the people we serve that spirituality and religion are valuable resources in finding hope, achieving wellness and living in recovery.

Religion and spirituality are important components of multicultural competence. They are also central to how many people view illness experiences, and how they achieve wellness and recovery.

DID YOU KNOW...?

- **1 in 5** Americans experiences a mental disorder in any given year, and half of all Americans will have a mental disorder at some time in their lives.
- **80%** of Americans describe themselves as religious.
- Over **70%** of mental health consumers/family members in California want their mental health care providers to discuss spiritual concerns with them upon request.
- **98%** of California's County Behavioral Health Directors agree that spirituality is an important element of multicultural competence.

SPIRITUALITY IS A SOURCE OF RESILIENCE FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Spirituality and religion are protective factors that help people be resilient in the face of losses and health challenges. This is also found to be true specifically for people with mental health conditions.

Actions to Promote the Integration of Mental Health, Spirituality, and Religion:

Mental Health Service Providers

(agencies or individuals):

Launch a dialogue within your organization about culturally sensitive methods for inquiring about and addressing the diverse spiritual & religious interests, beliefs, and worldviews of the people you serve.

Provide staff training by qualified speakers -- including consumers, family members, and spiritual leaders -- to increase the expertise and confidence of your staff in this area.

Develop practices in alignment with Department guidance for helping consumers to find spiritual and religious resources in their communities upon request.

Individuals & Families with Mental Health Issues:

- Pursue personal spiritual growth in a way that is personally meaningful.
- Talk to your mental health service provider about your spiritual life.
- Talk to your spiritual leader about your mental health issues.
- Connect with peers who have experience with and wisdom about spirituality and religion in recovery.

Faith Communities:

Encourage your members - individuals and families who have lived experience with mental health conditions - to tell the story of their recovery journey.

Consider making the elimination of stigma & discrimination, and the welcoming inclusion of people with mental health issues, a special focus for action by your faith community.

Develop relationships with private and public mental health agencies in your community so that you have ready access to referrals.

BOUNDARIES... The California Mental Health & Spirituality Initiative advocates for the inclusion of spirituality as a resource in mental health services. However, they also warn that mental health providers should never “push religion” on the people they serve, promote a particular religion, or proselytize. The Initiative’s Values Statement calls on mental health service providers to be “receptive and responsive” to the expressed interest of their clients and potential clients, including their requests for support with the spiritual aspects of their wellness and recovery. The Initiative also highlights “the paramount importance of client choice” in this regard, including the choice NOT to address spirituality or religion in his or her mental health services. Guidance from The Department on Assessment & Integration of Spiritual Interests of Clients in Their Wellness and Recovery is available online at http://dmh.lacounty.gov/wps/portal/dmh/clinical_tools/clinical_practice.

HOW DO WE DIFFERENTIATE SPIRITUALITY & RELIGION?

There are countless ways to define spirituality and religion. The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH) utilizes the following definitions:

Spirituality is a person's deepest sense of belonging and connection to a higher power or transcendent life philosophy which may not necessarily be related to an organized religious institution. (Adapted from the California Mental Health & Spirituality Initiative with input from the DMH Clergy Advisory Committee). Spirituality is a process of pursuing meaning and purpose in life (Marvin J. Southard, D.S.W., 2009).

Religion is a set of beliefs and practices designed to help an individual or group express and carry out their spirituality. (Provided by the DMH Clergy Advisory Committee.)

Spirituality is personal and may or may not involve a belief in the divine.



**IF YOU ARE IN CRISIS AND
NEED HELP RIGHT AWAY
CALL TOLL-FREE
24/7 ACCESS HELPLINE:
1-800-854-7771**

Patients' Rights Office

The Patients' Rights Office of the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health was created to protect and further the Constitutional and statutory rights of mental health care recipients. If you have any concerns about your treatment plan, please contact the Patients' Rights Office.

Phone: (213) 738-4888

Network of Care

The Network of Care web site is an online directory of community-based resources and services, including support groups and personal advocacy resources in the community.

<http://losangeles.networkofcare.org>

Los Angeles County

Department of Mental Health

550 S. Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90020
(213) 738-4601

<http://dmh.lacounty.gov>



MENTAL HEALTH, SPIRITUALITY, & RELIGION

