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PROMISING PRACTICES



Providing Culturally Effective Care at Alliance Clinic

By Emily Peach, Director of Quality, Compliance, and Accreditation at Meridian Behavioral Health

[Alliance Clinic](#), which serves the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area of Minnesota, is an outpatient clinic focused on the use of medication-assisted therapy for the treatment of opioid addiction. Alliance provides methadone maintenance, individual and group therapy, and assessment services to adults ages eighteen and over with multiple medical and psychiatric conditions.

Opioid addiction does not discriminate and affects the lives of people of all races, genders, and socioeconomic classes. Our clients represent the diverse community we serve, including those of African-American, Native American, and Hmong cultural backgrounds. To ensure that all individuals served by our clinics are given the best possible care, it is important that our staff is knowledgeable, understanding, and appreciative of the needs and sensitivities of a variety of populations and backgrounds.

In an effort to provide staff, clients, and the community with information about all of the steps Alliance is taking to ensure that culturally effective care is provided to all clients served, a Diversity Plan was created. Some of the efforts outlined in our Diversity Plan include:

Culturally Competent Treatment Services

Culturally specific group sessions are conducted weekly at the facility. These group sessions present an opportunity for clients to address and confront barriers to services, such as language, ethnicity/race, religion, sexual orientation,

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sex/gender roles, socioeconomic status, age, and spiritual beliefs.

In the group sessions, clients are able to address issues they are experiencing in recovery that may be specific to their heritage. For example, in the Hmong culture, it is disrespectful to refuse a drink offered by an elder. This can be an issue if a client is going to a wedding or other event where alcohol will be served. The group can discuss culturally appropriate ways of dealing with this type of situation. This helps in the development of the client's recovery plan.

Community Outreach

To increase awareness within the Hmong population of the dangers of opioid addiction and the resources available for treatment, staff members at Alliance Clinic conduct outreach efforts to community stakeholders through a representative of the Hmong community. Educational materials and resources are disseminated at senior centers, churches, Hmong nonprofit organizations in the metro area, and Hmong community events. Representatives from Alliance Clinic also conduct educational presentations at community events, if desired. We do the same for other cultural groups as well. For example, Meridian Behavioral Health, Alliance Clinic's parent company, hosts a booth annually as part of the Minneapolis pride festival supporting the local lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) population.

Another example of culturally specific care provided to clients from the Hmong community is the issuance of photo identification cards. Many of our Hmong clients do not have a form of photo identification or a way to obtain it. By issuing identification cards, we can quickly identify the correct individual receiving services.

Workforce Training

All Alliance Clinic staff members receive annual cultural diversity training and education conducted by a community representative of the African-American, Native American, and Hmong cultures. Alliance also promotes diversity among its staff through the recruitment and hiring of bilingual/bicultural staff. Alliance employs Native American, Hmong, and African-American counseling



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staff to ensure that individual treatment services are provided in the most effective, understandable, and respectful manner possible.

Culturally effective client care is only possible when cultural backgrounds—including beliefs, rituals, and customs—are recognized, valued, respected, and incorporated into treatment planning and services. Alliance Clinic has found that a Diversity Plan is a great way to communicate to staff, clients, and other stakeholders the program’s commitment to culturally effective care and the strategies to implement that care. With these strategies, the clinic has established relationships with various cultural groups in the community and has consistently received positive customer satisfaction scores across the board.

In a recent [CARF](#) survey report, Alliance Clinic was recognized for exemplary practice in regard to cultural competency addressing the spiritual beliefs of the persons served. For further information on Alliance Clinic’s cultural competency efforts, please contact the assistant program director, Pakou Chang, B.A., LADC, at Pakou.chang@meridianprograms.com or (612) 454-2295.

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