The Healing Forest: The Entire African American Community as the Recovery Center

Presenter:
Mark Sanders, LCSW, CADC
The Healing Forest

- Don Coyhis, White Bison
- www.whitebison.org
Don Coyhis:

• “Suppose you have 100 acres full of sick trees who want to get well. If each sick tree leaves the forest to find wellness and then returns to the forest, they get sick again from the infection of the rest of the trees. The Elders taught us that to treat the sick trees, you must treat the whole forest. You must create a healing forest. If not, the trees will just keep getting sick again. The community forest is now filled with alcoholic trees, drug-addicted trees, co-dependency trees, domestic violence trees, and trees with mental illness. The soil in which those trees are growing is missing the ceremonies, the songs, the stories, the language and the wisdom of our Elders.”
The Healing Forest: The African American Community as the Recovery Center

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith-based organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other social service organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons in long-term recovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The formerly incarcerated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned citizens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
African American Risk Factors for Substance Use Disorders

Urban Communities

Rural Communities
African Americans in Urban Communities:

An urban community is a city or town with 2,500 or more residents.
Urban Communities
Urban Communities: Risk Factors for African Americans

- Overcrowding
- High unemployment
- Easy access to drugs
- Community violence
- Fear of being dead soon
Urban Risk Factors

- Gangs
- Trauma
- Felony arrests
- Police brutality
- Gentrification
Gentrification...
More Risk Factors:

Poorly performing schools

“Haves” and “Have Nots”
Detroit
Risk Factor: Poverty
Job Loss
Result
Flint, Michigan
Rural Communities: Risk Factors for African Americans

- 20% of African Americans live in rural America
- Last hired, first fired (during recessions)
- Harder for African American farmers to get loans (14% to 2%)
- Lower union representation
- More arrests and criminal justice involvement
Rural Risk Factors

- Voter suppression
- Poverty
- Invisibility
- Northern gangs
Crisis

Shifted from a focus on acute care treatment to creating a healing forest
Timeline

- Crack cocaine crisis of the 1980’s
- The criminalization of addiction
- Increased child welfare involvement
- Methamphetamine crisis
- Opioid epidemic today
Healing Forests in African American Communities
Detroit Recovery Project

- Recovery anchored throughout the city of Detroit
- Partnership city of Detroit and state of Michigan
- Recovery Coaching
- Ongoing recovery support anchored in African American communities
- Sober Sports, recreation
- Recovery Housing
- Recovery Community Organization (RCO)
Recovery Community Organizations

A Recovery Community Organization (RCO) is led by persons in recovery, their family members, friends and allies. RCOs provide a combination of long-term peer-based recovery supports, community education, grassroots mobilization and advocacy to support recovery. *The sole mission of an RCO is to mobilize resources within and outside of a community to increase the prevalence and quality of long-term recovery within a community* (Valentine, White and Taylor, 20--).
Healing Forest, Continued

Interdenominational Partnerships

One Church One

Addict
Inmate
School
Chicago Recovery Communities Coalition

- Recovery Coaching (westside Chicago)
- Prevention program
- ROSC Council on the westside
- NARCAN
- Employment opportunities
Miracle Village, Gary, IN

- Services provided in public housing
- Affiliation with mental health, medical health, and childcare
- The use of recovery coaches
- Help with employment
Healing Forest: Criminal Justice

- Inner circle/winner circle
- South Western Correctional Center Recovery Coaching in prison
- Thresholds – police partnership

- Alternative to incarceration
- Co – occurring Disorders Services
- Employment Assistance
- Ongoing Recovery Coaching
Glide Church, San Francisco
“Radically inclusive”

2,000 members – 1,600 in recovery

Rallies in the community without anonymity

16 generations of recovery

Special programming for men and women
Recovery Oriented System of Care Council (ROSC)

Cross-section of the entire African American Community working together to create a healing forest to promote recovery:

- The clergy
- Church members
- Families
- Employers
- Treatment centers
ROSC Councils:

- Persons in recovery
- Criminal justice personnel
- Other social service organizations
**Online Museum of African American Addictions, Treatment and Recovery**

**WELCOME** The purpose of this website is to serve as a single location where individuals who are interested in information about addictions, treatment, and recovery among African Americans can be found. The site contains historical data, scholarly articles, educational videos, music and DVDs.