



STAFF INNOVATION SUMMARY—CONTRA COSTA

Name of Innovative (INN) Project: Overcoming Transportation Barriers

Total Requested for Project: \$1,023,346

Duration of Innovative Project: Four (4) Years

Review History

County INN plan approved by County Board of Supervisors on June 7, 2016.

Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC or Commission) consideration of INN Project: July 28, 2016.

Project Introduction:

Contra Costa County proposes to reduce barriers to mental health service utilization by providing a comprehensive peer-run transportation program. This program will address barriers to transportation through direct support services, advocacy and infrastructure changes. The program will employ three peer support transportation coordinators to enhance consumers' access to care. Transportation coordinators will assist consumers in navigating transportation challenges (finding resources, resolving problems with the Department of Motor Vehicles), advocate for changes in the transportation system through the development of an advocacy committee, and develop a transportation hotline.

Transportation coordinators will also assist consumers in developing skills for navigating transportation challenges. Coordinators will address stigma and discrimination, assist consumers in overcoming anxiety or fears related to transportation, train clients in managing emotional difficulties that may arise when travelling to appointments, and help clients develop independent skills to navigate transportation challenges allowing them greater freedom to attend social activities.

Funding for this Innovation project is requested primarily to provide salary support to peer coordinators and to purchase vehicles to assist in transport.

In the balance of this brief we address specific criteria that the MHSOAC looks for when evaluating Innovation Plans, including: What is the unmet need that the county is trying to address? Does the proposed project address the need? Are there clear learning objectives that link to the need? And, will the proposed evaluation allow the county to make any conclusions regarding their learning objectives? In addition, the MHSOAC checks to see that the Innovation meets regulatory requirements that the proposed

program or project must align with the core Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) principles, promote learning, funds exploration of a new and/or locally adapted mental health approach/practice, and targets one of the four allowable primary purposes.

The Need

In response to transportation challenges identified by consumers through early planning processes, Contra Costa County developed a Transportation Committee in 2011. The current proposal is based on the committee's *Findings and Recommendations from the Transportation Committee Report*, and the results of a survey conducted in 2015 by the Mental Health Statistics Improvement Project. These efforts identified the following transportation challenges for Contra Costa County consumers:

1. A lack of skills for navigating transportation systems
2. Lack of available public transportation
3. Emotional challenges impeding the use of public transportation.

The findings of this report are consistent with previous research, which suggests that transportation is a major barrier to mental health services, particularly for minority communities (Hernandez et al., 2015; Burrus et al., 2010; DHHS, 2004). For consumers who have limited English proficiency, or for those who are recent immigrants, navigating transportation may be especially challenging. The needs of these communities may require special consideration in this transportation program. Consumers may lack familiarity with buses or other public transport, they may not be able to access resources in their native language, and/or they may be unfamiliar with the city. It may be critical to ensure that peer support providers are bilingual and understand the cultural and linguistic challenges that many immigrant/refugee consumers face in using the public transportation system.

The Response

The Contra Costa County *Overcoming Transportation Barriers* proposal addresses the aforementioned challenges by implementing a peer support transportation program.

Concern (1) will be addressed by providing a transportation hotline, assisting clients with identifying appropriate public transportation and developing transportation plans, and helping clients navigate personal vehicle issues. These skills will generalize to navigating transportation to social events, enhancing consumers' engagement in the community and reducing isolation. Reducing isolation is a critical component of recovery. This project has the potential to enhance the engagement of consumers with their communities. Ensuring that these independent living skills are generalizable to community engagement in addition to mental health treatment may increase the positive impact of this program. It may be important to operationalize this training and more specifically to address this aspect.

Concern (2) will be addressed through the identification of gaps in public transportation, the development of a committee to advocate for enhanced public transportation resources, the provision of transportation vouchers, and the provision of increased

transportation services through the purchase of vehicles and direct transportation to treatment services.

Concern (3) will be addressed by assisting clients in addressing stigma and helping clients learn to manage emotions that arise. To effectively address emotional issues that arise in engaging in public transportation, peer support coordinators may require additional supervision and/or a curriculum for stress management or other structured intervention.

The County states that this program is innovative in that it builds a comprehensive navigation program for consumers of mental health services that includes supportive services, promoting effective coping, reducing stigma and isolation, and addressing a key barrier to care. Further, the use of peer specialists to implement this program is innovative.

The Community Planning Process

As noted above, Contra Costa County's Plan is the result of a planning process conducted by a Transportation Committee over several years. In addition, the plan takes into account the finding of similar efforts conducted through SAMHSA and San Diego County. It builds on these projects and provides a new component, the use of peers as support coordinators.

Learning Objectives and Evaluation

Learning objectives for the Contra Costa County Innovation project include exploring the effectiveness of **Peer Support Worker Transportation Coordinators** in reducing transportation barriers for consumers. The evaluation will explore improvements in Clients' development of self-management and independent living skills, increase of service use, and decrease "no-show" rates.

The evaluation will be conducted by the Contra Costa County Behavioral Health Service (CCBHS). Annual outcomes using existing measures will be presented to stakeholders. CCBHS may consider specifying their measures and including information regarding:

- How many clients will be served?
- How will the current proposal address disparities in access for underserved groups? (In particular, penetration rates for Latinos are low, how may this program provide targeted efforts to increase utilization for this community?)
- How many appointments will be met?
- Pre and post tests for self-management and/or independent living skills?
- Documenting changes in transportation policies and practices?
- Documenting the activities of the transportation workgroup and their progress?

The Budget

The proposed budget is \$1,023,346 and includes \$314,830 for the first year and \$236,172 for years two through four. The County states that evaluation expenditures will be one-eighth of the Health Services Planner/Evaluator B salary, or \$14,986 per year (about 6.3 percent of the budget in years 2 and 3), and administration expenses will be 1/8 of the Mental Health Project Manager salary or \$20,170 per year (5.9 percent of the overall budget). The County has not included an estimate for indirect administration expenses, nor identified ancillary, direct administrative expenses beyond salary for the project manager.

The primary expenditure will be for the 3.0 full time equivalent (FTE) peer support personnel. Other expenditures include transportation vouchers and a one-time cost of the purchase of county vehicles. It may be important to plan for the use of vehicles for MHSa purposes following the project period and discuss why the option of purchasing the vehicles was chosen rather than using ride sharing or taxi companies.

Additional Regulatory Requirements

The proposed project appears to meet or exceed minimum standards for compliance with other requirements under the MHSa. The project addresses a well-documented barrier to mental health utilization: transportation difficulties. The use of peer support coordinators is an innovative component to the plan. In addition, the attention to the integration of independent living skills and the promotion of coping strategies is a challenging albeit important aspect of this project.

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