



## **INNOVATION PLAN APPROVAL SUMMARY**

### **Imperial County Innovation**

**Name of Innovative Program: MHSA First Steps to Success**

**Total Requested for Innovation: \$1,498,366**

**Duration of Innovative Program: Three Years**

**Staff Recommends: APPROVAL**

#### **Review History**

County Submitted Innovation Plan: March 5, 2014

MHSOAC Vote regarding Plan Approval: March 27, 2014

#### **Innovation Plan Summary**

Imperial County is seeking the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC or Commission) approval for their Innovative Program, MHSA First Steps to Success (FSS). The primary learning goal is to assess whether developing a collaborative relationship between Imperial County Behavioral Health Services (ICBHS) staff, education and parents focused on implementation of an evidence-based practice will increase access to behavioral health services for kindergarten and first grade students who are at risk of serious mental illness, and their families. This population is significantly underserved in Imperial County and elsewhere. The county cites research that found that 20-22 percent of school-age children have serious unmet mental health needs.

Imperial County's idea is to create, evaluate, and sustain a new collaborative approach to early detection and interventions, primarily based in schools. The Innovative Project will test the idea that education and behavioral health working as partners to implement FSS will help establish a lasting collaborative relationship that will change organizational cultures and practices, resulting in increased identification of young children at risk of serious mental illness and increased access to mental health services.

FSS is an evidence-based program that that has historically been implemented by school personnel, with the goal to prevent an antisocial path as a consequence of unaddressed mental illness. FSS consists of three modules: (1) proactive, universal screening of kindergarteners; (2) school-based interventions involving teacher, peers, and children who manifest risk of mental illness, and (3) parent/caregiver training and involvement to support the child's improved mental health and resulting improved school adjustment. In the proposed adaptation, ICBHS staff rather than school personnel will provide interventions at school, serving as the behavior coach or

interventionist. The program will also engage the parents of the identified at-risk children and by their regular presence at the school, will increase awareness, education and dialogue about indicators and risk factors of mental illness.

**Evaluation:**

ICBHS staff, education staff, and local stakeholders will conduct ongoing evaluation of this collaborative process to assess its effectiveness and make recommendations. Yearly program reviews will be presented during ICBHS and education collaborative meetings and at quarterly MHSA Steering Committee meetings, to assist in identifying areas of improvement and sustainability.

Imperial County hopes to achieve the following outcomes related to developing and sustaining improved collaboration between ICBHS and Education

1. Development of inter-agency policies and methods that support effective communication and referral processes.
2. Development of a common mission and culture to address the mental health needs of young children.
3. Quality of the relationship among collaboration partners.
4. Effectiveness of collaborative attitudes and behaviors.
5. Effectiveness of collaborative skills.
6. Unique aspects and approaches tried in this collaboration.
7. Elements of the approach to collaboration that were and were not effective.
8. Effectiveness of methods to reduce barriers to effective collaborative.
9. Effectiveness of the resources and supports used.

The County will assess which elements of this approach of collaboration will be sustainable at the end of the three (3)-year work plan and plans to replicate the sustainable elements of the approach through trainings at various county school districts and sites.

In addition to assessing the effectiveness of the approach to collaboration, which is the primary purpose for this Innovative Project, the County will also assess the impact of FSS related to program goals to increase access to services, reduce stigma, and improve the quality of services.