

**Prop 63 Mental Health Services
Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC)
Evaluation Fact Sheet¹**

**IMPACT OF SUPPORTIVE SERVICES ON CLIENT OUTCOMES USING
PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION METHODS**

Primary Purpose: Determine the impact of supportive services on employment, housing, and recovery/resilience/wellness for individuals receiving selected public mental health services and their families. Participatory evaluation methods were used to achieve this goal, which entail developing and carrying out all aspects of the evaluation in partnership with persons with lived experience.

Background: In partnership with persons with lived experience, this project was designed to evaluate the impact of access to several types of supportive services by individuals with mental illness. Three specific types of services were focused on: *Peer support services* (any services or supports provided by an individual who has lived experienced with mental health services), *employment support services* (any program or activity intended to assist with preparing for obtaining employment), and *crisis intervention services* (any mental health program or activity that helps individuals deal with a serious and unexpected situation). Researchers and those with lived experience jointly determined how to define and measure the impact of these three services. The following outcomes were selected to focus on: client perceptions of recovery, resilience, and wellness, housing/residential status, and employment status. A survey and interviews with consumers and family members were identified as the preferred study methods.

Major Findings:

Access to Supportive Services

- The three types of services were generally perceived as accessible. Fewer than 22% of respondents who received services reported difficulties with access. Most peer and employment service recipients

perceived them as a fit with their cultural and life experiences and service needs.

- For respondents who *did not receive services*, stigma of mental health services and lack of information or knowledge about services were identified as key barriers to accessing these services.
- Certain populations of individuals who have traditionally been underserved (e.g., individuals with physical disabilities and individuals who are homeless) expressed some difficulty in accessing peer support services specifically.

Impact on Recovery/Resilience/Wellness

- Those who received services were more likely to report personal recovery, resilience, and wellness than those who did not receive services.
- More than three-quarters of individuals who received peer support services agreed that the services helped them to feel better and helped with their recovery.
- Most individuals said that the services they received adopted a philosophy that recovery is possible, provided individualized care, and/or supported their right to self-determination.

Impact on Employment and Housing Status

- There were no statistically significant differences in employment situation and housing status between those who received supportive services and those who didn't.
- However, more than half of respondents who received employment services or peer support services agreed that the services had a positive impact on their employment and living situations.

¹This series of fact sheets provides brief summaries of MHSOAC evaluations of Prop 63 and California's public community-based mental health system. The MHSOAC is charged with providing oversight and accountability per the Mental Health Services Act (also known as Prop 63).

Quotes from Interview Respondents

An adult who received a range of services revealed her personal philosophy on the matter: It is okay to need help.

"I can be really out of control... So I stay with my support... I have a lot of issues. I have not come this far by myself. I know that I need as much support as humanly possible because, you know, today's a good day, but I do not know what tomorrow is like... I realize how important it is to ask for help, when you need it, and it's okay when you ask for help."

Finding supportive peer communities and professional services gave many respondents the strength to embrace their identities, experience self-growth, and gain the self-confidence to do things they did not think possible. One adult respondent offered a reason why peer support services were helpful to him:

"Recognizing that I have something of value... Telling [myself] I am of value—I think that's significant for anyone, not just people with mental illness."

An older adult respondent described the services she received as valuing peer expertise and involvement when she expressed that the best thing about the peer support services she received was relating to someone and feeling like they really "get it." In the short passage below, she describes her relationship with a favorite counselor:

"They need more people like [my counselor]. More understanding people [like her]. You know, I have not asked her what she has been through, but I get the impression that she or someone close to her has had some of the same issues that she talks to me about... It was just like talking to a friend."

Methodology: Participatory research methods were used throughout this evaluation with involvement of individuals with lived experienced and family members.

A mixed-methods evaluation employing a statewide survey of 949 individuals and 40 interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, and Traditional Chinese. Surveys were submitted by those with mental illness who received services and those who wanted but did not receive services.

Principle Investigators: UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities with Clarus Research, Inc.

Link to Study:

<http://www.mhsoac.ca.gov/Evaluations/ParticipatoryResearch.aspx>

Implications:

The study demonstrated that persons with lived experience and family members can be trained sufficiently in research methodology to make a valuable contribution to evaluation studies. The persistence and enthusiasm of the evaluation partners through a lengthy and detailed evaluation effort was also noteworthy. The investigators noted: "Participatory evaluation holds tremendous promise for focusing efforts on fresh and relevant topics and encouraging the use of research methods that inform actionable program and system improvement activities."

Study findings show that many individuals are gaining access to much needed services, although some are still faced with challenges in this domain. Strong evidence emerged of improvements in personal recovery, resilience, and wellness after receiving mental health services. This finding was observed for both survey and interview respondents. This suggests that supportive services may have a positive impact on these outcomes.

Recommendations:

Continue to use participatory evaluation methods and involve consumers and family members throughout the evaluation process.

Additional studies should be done to: 1) determine the effectiveness of consumer run services; 2) determine the impact of promising and/or community based practices being developed by counties, particularly for underserved, underserved or inappropriately served populations; 3) better understand the link between consumer perceptions and concrete changes in status/outcomes; and 4) measure the recovery-orientation of programs.

Advocate for adoption of evidence-based practices that will improve employment outcomes.