

DRAFT
MHSOAC Evaluation Committee
Initial Discussion Document
Regarding FY 12/13 Evaluation Resources
July 19, 2012

Purpose: The 2012 Charter for the MHSOAC Evaluation Committee includes the responsibility to “Recommend priorities for the FY 12/13 MHSOAC evaluation resources to the MHSOAC. Explore feasibility of including an evaluation of Innovation.” This paper is intended to initiate discussions regarding use of these resources for next fiscal year.

Background: For the past few years, the Evaluation Committee has brainstormed potential uses of the funding for MHSOAC evaluations, prioritized those uses, developed more specific proposals and selected highest priority options for recommendation to the Commission. The Commission has approved the Evaluation Committee recommendations.

In response to recommendations from the Evaluation Committee, in November 2011, the Commission approved the development of an evaluation master plan to guide use of MHSOAC evaluation resources and to provide guidance on how to use the information from those evaluations. The master plan is under development and the target date for completion is 12/2012.

We need to begin selection of priorities for FY 12/13 evaluation resources prior to completion of the master plan to be able to encumber these funds using a competitive selection process. Although it’s not complete, significant input has been obtained to guide the development of the master plan. Rather than beginning the discussion based on brainstorming, the following list of options were developed consistent with the master plan input to date and are being provided as a starting point for the Committee discussion. These are broad concepts that will need to be refined if there is interest.

In addition to evaluation investments, there continues to be a great deal of interest in technical assistance needed to improve data quality, in evaluation design and implementation, use of data by stakeholders, etc. The MHSOAC will advocate for needed focus of technical assistance resources in collaboration with Department of Health Care Services.

Options Consistent with Master Plan Development (not in order of priority)

A. Program Level Data for FSPs to Support Quality Improvement. There is interest in providing program level data on the assumption that the greatest opportunity for quality improvement is at the program level. Some large counties already have the capacity to give this type of data to their FSP providers, but medium and smaller counties do not. The study would entail working with a selected set of counties and FSP programs to determine the feasibility of the state’s providing program level data from the state’s DCR system. This would entail work with these counties and programs to test and refine strategies for assuring data accuracy and timely reporting of data back to the programs. An additional

component might be to assess the impact of the data feedback on the policy and practices of the programs.

B. A Special Study of FSPs to Explore the Differences in Characteristics of Clients and Programs and Their Impact on Client Outcomes. We are making progress in documenting the impacts of FSPs overall on client outcomes. We are reluctant to make comparisons across FSPs because of variations in characteristics of clients served and amount and type of services received. And we do not know which of these variables make a difference in terms of client outcomes. This would be an exploratory study (1) to determine if by using currently available data to see if it is possible to develop a meaningful classification of FSP programs and (2) to determine what factors make a difference in outcomes. This would entail ensuring a good linkage of CSI and DCR data systems and more accurate reporting of client numbers in DCR.

C. Evaluation System Change Consistent with MHSA Values or General Standard. There is an interest in studying whether the mental health system has changed as a result of MHSA particularly in regards to the fundamental values underlying the MHSA. This study would focus on the MHSA goal of establishing recovery oriented programs and systems. Possible steps include the following: (1) Reviewing existing measures of recovery-oriented program environments and pick three or four to pilot test in selected counties. (2) Comparing the results of the measures used in the pilot testing and make recommendations for further testing or implementation. (3) Conducting a preliminary exploratory study of the differences in client outcomes related to extent of program recovery-orientation. Include persons with lived experience in the design and implementation of the study.

D. Support Local Oversight Efforts. The most recent realignment shifted responsibility for approval of most of the MHSA local resources from the state to the county. The role of the local boards and commissions has increased importance in this realigned system. This study is proposed to determine the feasibility of enhancing the effectiveness of these boards. Possible steps include the following: identify boards and commissions that are effective and determine what makes them effective; confirm this finding by exploring the challenges that are faced by less effective boards/commissions; suggest what tasks would be necessary to improve the effectiveness of those boards/commissions not doing well; pilot the validity and feasibility of the recommended tasks by piloting them in a few selected counties. Consider partnering with the Planning Council and CiMH in this effort. (The Planning Council has a statutory role in working with boards and commissions. CiMH has a long-term role in providing training to these entities.)

E. Initial Evaluation of Innovation Component. This initial effort would catalog INN programs/investments, determine commonality to design an evaluation, then fund the actual evaluation of a priority group of innovations, if feasible and desirable.

F. Build on RAND PEI Evaluation Framework. RAND is developing a population based public health PEI evaluation framework. The final report including the details of the framework is not yet available, but it is likely that implementation of any part of it will require additional work. This project would set

aside some evaluation resources to fund the most important and feasible recommendations for implementation from this framework.

G. Strengthen Data Systems. Access to quality, timely data is essential for Commission evaluations. During the transition from DMH to DHCS, continue to provide support for the DCR and/or support other state level critical data systems. New possibilities to build upon what has currently been done to include recommending changes to the DCR to increase accuracy, adding additional data elements to the DCR, additional training for counties on how to access and use their DCR data, improving the linkage between the CSI and the DCR, additional training on how to record race/ethnicity. Another possibility is to work with vendors used by the counties to facilitate work on adapting their systems to allow easier reporting of state required data. Consider developing one or more data groups with county representatives to assist in these tasks.

H. Increase MHSOAC Internal Evaluation Resources. With the clarification of the MHSOAC lead role in evaluation, additional internal resources are needed to support the Commission. The functions could include developing standardized and ad hoc reports, providing guidance on behalf of the Commission regarding state level data system development and support, review of technical evaluation documents, etc. These internal resources could include consultants, contracts and/or additional staff to primarily build internal capacity for the MHSOAC to support its on-going evaluation efforts.

Proposed Next Steps: The Committee will provide input to determine priority options for further development. Staff will develop proposals consistent with the Evaluation Priority Setting document completed in FY 11/12. Staff are seeking Evaluation Committee members who are interested and willing to providing technical expertise to staff in development of these proposals. The proposals will be discussed at the August 2012 committee meeting to finalize recommendations to the Commission for its September 2012 meeting.