



INNOVATION PLAN APPROVAL SUMMARY Merced County

Strengthening Families Project

Total Requested for Innovation: \$1,663,400

Staff Recommend: APPROVAL

Review History

County Submitted Innovation Work Plan: July 15, 2010

MHSOAC Vote regarding Plan Approval: August 26, 2010

County Demographic Profile

Merced County is located in the central San Joaquin Valley. Major sources of employment include agriculture, food processing, retail, and manufacturing.

- Population: 245,321
 - Latino: 53%
 - Caucasian (not Hispanic): 34%
 - APA: 7%
 - Native American: 2%
 - African American: 4%
- Age
 - 32% under age 18
 - 10% age 65 or older

Duration: three years

Similar to other MHSOAC Innovation Programs: none

Key Features of Innovation Program

- Develops a model to address the attachment needs of children in underserved, unincorporated areas of Merced County, many of whom live in poverty
- Family members and community leaders act as “developmental partners” to support parents and other caregivers and children/youth during developmental milestones and life transitions, with a focus on enhancing secure attachment and intervening early in the event of developmental problems
- Develops a culturally competent training curriculum and model to teach diverse parents and caregivers about developmental milestones
- Helps stressed parents and caregivers strengthen networks of emotionally supportive friends, family, and neighbors to make it easier to care for their children and themselves
- Provides services in natural, accessible, and relevant community settings

Expected Contribution to Learning and Development of New/Improved Mental Health Approaches

- Access whether the program will reach people from diverse communities in unincorporated areas of Merced County currently unserved by the mental health system
- Access whether increasing participants' understanding of child development, increases confidence in parenting, decreases parental stress, and increases perceived social support
- Access whether the program will increase awareness of mental health issues and resources, decrease stigma, and foster the development of community support systems in diverse, underserved, isolated communities

Example Reviewer Comments

- Appreciation for the availability of Spanish and Hmong interpreters at community program planning activities to ensure full participation of unserved and underserved groups.
- Requested and received clarification that planning activities occurred in unincorporated areas where Strengthening Families Project will be implemented
- "As a family member, I feel that this is very creative and so needed! In my experience, if you have a child with emotional challenges, it's pure hell. Having an extended family member to assist you, it's a whole different thing."
- "I feel it is a good project. A lot of people don't know about the child's various stages."