MHSOAC

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMISSION

# Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Training and Technical Assistance Framework

The Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), including referenced legislation for Systems of Care, identifies community, program/system, and individual/family outcomes for the public mental health system. Bringing about these positive outcomes as well as manifesting the vision of the MHSA and effectively serving diverse clients, requires that the individuals who work in myriad roles within the public mental health system have the supports they need, including training and technical assistance when appropriate.

## Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) Role in Training and Technical Assistance

Supporting California counties, including their community partners, clients, stakeholders, and contractors, to plan, implement, and evaluate mental health services and use evaluation data for quality improvement is an important part of the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission's (MHSOAC) responsibility for oversight and accountability of the public mental health system. In March 2011 Assembly Bill (AB) 100 amended the MHSA (Welfare & Institutions Code Section 5846(b)) to provide that the Commission instead of the Department of Mental Health "*may provide technical assistance to any county mental health plan as needed to address concerns or recommendations of the commission or when local programs could benefit from technical assistance for improvement of their plans.*"

Additionally, the MHSA states that the MHSOAC may participate in joint state-county decision making process for training and technical assistance to meet the mission and goals for the state's mental health system. While there may be occasions when counties request assistance from the MHSOAC for plan development, a key role of the MHSOAC is to facilitate and coordinate effective use of training and technical assistance resources.

Governor Jerry Brown's Proposed State Budget for 2012-13 states that "the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission will be responsible for Mental Health Services Act training, technical assistance, and program evaluation." [1]

## Scope

The scope addressed in this framework encompasses any publicly funded training and technical assistance that intends to improve the performance and impact of the public mental health system.

## Definitions

There are many definitions of training and technical assistance; this paper offers the following:

[1] Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr.. (January 5, 2012). Governor's Budget Summary 2012-2013, p. 19.

***Training*:** structured educational and supportive activities intended to accomplish defined learning goals and to develop, improve, and enhance participants' knowledge, skills, and role performance.

***Technical Assistance*:** targeted, customized support in response to a request to address specific questions or challenges. Technical assistance can include peer-to-peer mentoring, coaching, and consultation. Though generally technical assistance is brief, its levels, intensity, scope, and duration vary.

## Outcome-Driven Oversight and Accountability

Establishing priorities and policies to link training and technical assistance to positive mental health practices and outcomes is a key task for the MHSOAC Services Committee. An outcomes framework for training and technical assistance is consistent with the MHSOAC's November 2010 policy paper, "Accountability through Evaluative Efforts Focusing on Oversight, Accountability and Evaluation." The policy states,

> Through its statewide evaluation efforts, the MHSOAC will strive to assure California taxpayers that the use of state public funds for mental health services will result in efficient investments at the local and state levels which achieve effective outcomes for consumers and positive community impacts. The MHSOAC is committed to an approach of continuous evaluation, learning from and building upon each progressive completed evaluation. The approach will be focused on quality improvement.

A results-focused approach to training and technical assistance is also consistent with the AB 100 Work Group's Report,[2] adopted by the MHSOAC in May 2011, which recommended that "the MHSOAC should focus on technical assistance related to identified outcomes and indicators consistent with the MHSA evaluations."

## Principles for training and technical assistance

AB 100 Work Group Report recommendations and MHSOAC policy is to

1. Ensure that statewide training and technical assistance include:
    - The priorities of clients, family members, and unserved, underserved, and inappropriately served communities
    - The priorities of counties and service providers (from both mental health and other related service sectors)
    - Results-based training and technical assistance based on research.
2. Training and technical assistance should help counties improve their performance outcomes.

[2] Executives of organizations with responsibilities designated in the MHSA – the MHSOAC, Department of Mental Health, California Mental Health Planning Council, and California Mental Health Directors Association – and statewide organizations who represent people with serious mental illness and their family members – Network of Mental Health Clients, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, California Mental Health Association, and United Advocates for Children and Families – met from March through May 2011 to develop recommendations for implementing AB 100, including the provisions regarding the MHSOAC responsibility for training and technical assistance.

3. Higher performing counties can assist lower performing counties to improve their effectiveness.

Consistent with these overarching priorities, the Services Committee recommends to the MHSOAC the following MHSA training and technical assistance principles as a framework for excellence in evaluating and providing oversight for statewide training and technical assistance.

- Training and technical assistance reflect and embody as well as advance values and practices articulated in the MHSA.
- Strength-based training and technical assistance build on the knowledge and skills of trainees, including counties and their community partners, as well as addressing their self-defined needs and priorities.
- Design and delivery of training and technical assistance is collaborative and reflects diverse perspectives and multiple opportunities to contribute, including participation by diverse community providers[3]
- Training and technical assistance utilize effective approaches that advance learning for diverse participants
- Training and technical assistance reflect the expertise that comes from experience as well as from study and research.
- Training and technical assistance provide opportunities for people implementing the MHSA to share resources, information, effective practices, and "lessons-learned" with each other and with various segments of the larger mental health community.
- New statewide training and technical assistance activities complement and build on existing effective training and technical assistance activities; duplication of effort is avoided.
- Training and technical assistance are responsive to and contribute to quality improvement.
- Training and technical assistance support a statewide community of practice and learning that contributes to excellence in public mental health services.

## Training and Technical Assistance Outcomes

The MHSOAC emphasis on evaluation and quality improvement provides the basis for the following intended outcomes of training and technical assistance statewide.

1. Counties, including their community partners, clients, family members, stakeholders, and contractors, have the necessary supports, knowledge, skills, and resources to plan, implement, evaluate, and improve services.
2. Training and technical assistance resources are prioritized to support outcomes that the MHSA specifies, particularly program and system outcomes.

[3] It is, for example, important to work in collaboration with the California Mental Health Planning Council, to whom the MHSA assigns responsibility for approval of five-year plans for training and development of the public mental health workforce and to review program performance for public mental health services. It is also important to work with the Training and Technical Assistance advisory group mandated by WI Code 4050-406a.

3. Training and technical assistance are accessible to the broad range of county participants who can make use of it to strengthen the public mental health system.
4. Training and technical assistance are leveraged and coordinated.
5. Effectiveness of training and technical assistance is evaluated, including its impact on participants' knowledge, skills, and/or practice (training) and the extent to which its stated goal was achieved (technical assistance).
6. Results of evaluations of training and technical assistance are used to improve the delivery of training and technical assistance.

## Possible Priorities for Action

The following are possible priorities for action.

1. Support counties' capacity to conduct meaningful evaluation of MHSA.
2. Support creation of an integrated statewide MHSA Clearinghouse for training and technical assistance resources and a library to house historical archives of MHSA activities and "lesson's learned." Ensure broadest availability of rich array of MHSA resources developed by counties, communities, and training and technical assistance organizations.
3. Provide oversight to the state entity that contracts to provide statewide training and technical assistance related to the public mental health system.
4. Participate in a work group to develop training and technical assistance that meets the mission and goals for the state's mental health system.
5. Assess and disseminate information regarding counties' use of Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) funds for training and technical assistance, with focus on statewide impact and contribution of "local training expertise."
6. Compile and communicate information about effective training, including cross-cultural perspectives.
7. Work with Evaluation Committee to support counties to evaluate new practices they are developing through Innovative Programs; support counties to implement and disseminate successful Innovative Programs.

## Conclusion/Recommendations

We invite the MHSOAC to

1. Adopt MHSA Training and Technical Assistance Framework as recommended by MHSOAC Services Committee.
2. Charge MHSOAC Services Committee to identify next steps to implement Training and Technical Assistance Framework.