

Overview of MHSOAC Evaluation Master Plan Study 5: Effectiveness of MHSA-Funded Evidence-Based Practices for Children and Families

The MHSOAC Evaluation Master Plan provides the following description of the focus of Study 5: Determine the scope of implementation and effectiveness of evidence-based practices (EBPs) for children and their families.

- How broadly have EBPs been implemented with children and families?
- How effective has the implementation been? Are outcomes as good as in the original models?

We can address these questions to some degree internally with existing data, and have already begun to do so. For example, our recent Local Evaluation Survey should allow us to answer the following:

- What EBP programs for children and families are being implemented?
- In what counties are those EBPs being implemented?
- How widespread are EBPs throughout the state?
- Which EBP programs have been evaluated? What have those evaluations found in terms of outcomes and efficacy of program implementation?

Given that these questions can be addressed, MHSOAC staff have been considering ideas for how to further explore this area in a meaningful way. The conclusion of a recent MHSOAC-funded evaluation of Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) programs that were EBPs suggested that provision of EBPs may lead to cost savings. In addition, one MHSA-defined goal is to offer cost effective programs. The importance of identifying the degree of cost efficacy for MHSA-funded programs was highlighted in recent revisions to the annual Prioritization Process through which MHSOAC evaluations are prioritized for completion each year.

Based on these factors, one idea is to structure the scope of work for this evaluation so that it builds upon what was learned via the completed PEI evaluation (which is also a prioritization criterion) and focuses on identification of cost effectiveness or cost savings associated with EBPs being funded through the MHSA. A focus in this area could address a question such as the following:

- Is it financially beneficial/cost effective to implement EBPs in California using MHSA funds?

MHSOAC evaluation staff are seeking input from Evaluation Committee members on this proposed study focus, as well as possible methods for doing so.