



## **INNOVATION PLAN APPROVAL SUMMARY**

### **Kings County Innovation**

**Name of Innovative Project: Youth Researching Resiliency Project**

**Total Requested for Innovative Project: \$505,000**

**Duration of Innovative Project: 3 Years**

**Staff Recommends: APPROVAL**

#### **Review History**

County Submitted Innovation (INN) Plan: July 3, 2015

Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC or Commission) vote on INN project: July 23, 2015

#### **Innovative Program Summary**

Kings County is seeking MHSOAC approval for the following INN project: Youth Researching Resiliency (YRR). The County proposes to collaborate with transition-age youth (TAY) from geographically or culturally isolated rural communities, many of whom are at risk or suffer from a mental illness, and to engage these youth in leading participatory research and evaluation. The purpose is to identify resiliency factors to improve County mental health programming for diverse TAY at risk of or with a mental illness. Applying youth-led participatory research to mental health program planning will inform new program strategies rooted in community strengths and improve services and outcomes for TAY who are at risk of or suffer from mental illness. The Project will also encourage TAY, including those with a mental illness, to take an active role in County mental health issues.

The INN project will recruit TAY from Tribal and other culturally isolated rural communities to advocate for themselves and their communities and engage in positive behavioral change through skill-building, empowerment, and problem solving. TAY participants will receive training focused on mental health topics, evaluation, communication, research design, cultural competency, and community engagement. Adult mentors will assist TAY participants to develop the evaluation design and data collection methods and to actively engage community members in research to help identify resiliency factors that contribute to strength-based service delivery approaches.

Youth-directed research focused on community resiliency factors to inform strength-based mental health programming has not been extensively implemented or studied. Engaging youth to lead community research to inform program recommendations may bolster and reinforce greater inclusion in mental health services of identified resiliency factors or protective factors that prevent or counter various mental health risk factors prevalent within underserved communities. In addition, it is expected that the project will have a significant positive impact on the mental health outcomes of the TAY involved with the project, many of whom themselves are at higher than average risk of developing a mental illness or who have lived experience of a mental illness.

### **Evaluation:**

The learning goal of this INN Project is to assess whether and how youth-led participatory research affects mental health services for TAY at risk of or with a mental illness, with a focus on greater inclusion of program approaches that support resiliency and empowerment. The County will measure program success at a number of levels, including the impact of the project on the mental health system and its TAY clients with risk or presence of a mental illness, on TAY participants, and for the community. The following are some examples of expected outcomes the County plans to measure:

#### Impact on Service Delivery

- Providers' receptiveness to TAY-recommended ideas and approaches for mental health programs and approaches.
- Change in providers' perception about how to effectively serve TAY at risk of or with a mental illness, especially those who are currently isolated and underserved.
- New services or changes to service delivery implemented as a result of the project and TAY feedback and results of the participatory evaluation.
- Increased cultural competency in mental health services and approaches rendered to the TAY at risk of and with a mental illness in geographically and culturally isolated communities within Kings County.
- Increase in the number of TAY-targeted mental health programs.
- Greater access to mental health services by TAY who are at risk of or suffer from mental illness.
- Increased positive perceptions of mental health services and of community strengths among TAY with and at risk of a mental illness and other community stakeholders.

#### Impact on Participation in Planning and Evaluation of TAY from Diverse Communities

- Increased leadership and decision-making capability and activity of project participants.
- Increased positive perceptions of mental health services among project participants.
- Increased engagement by TAY from diverse communities in the County mental health system, including program planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- Increased knowledge of and reduced stigma regarding mental health issues.

### Impact on Community

- Increased positive perceptions of mental health services among community members, especially currently underserved communities within Kings County.
- Increase in community engagement, especially of underserved communities, in planning for mental health services and in contributing to the mental health system.
- Improved perceptions with regard to mental health.

### Program Data and Milestones

- Number of participants from the target population that are continuously engaged.
- Community resiliency successfully identified.
- Findings and resulting recommendations reported successfully.
- Establishment of a TAY speakers' bureau or similar forum to provide input, recommendation and perspective to service providers as a means for on-going process improvement.

The evaluation will use self-assessment surveys of participants, as well as client data and community surveys, to compare baseline levels and changes throughout the project. TAY participants will take an active role in developing and contributing to the evaluation of this project, in collaboration with the County, in addition to their overall work on the participatory evaluation that is a key focus of this project.