



INNOVATION PLAN APPROVAL SUMMARY

Stanislaus County

Name of Innovative Project: Youth Peer Navigator Project

Total Requested for Innovative Project: \$86,502

Duration of Innovative Project: Two Years

Staff Recommends: APPROVAL

Review History

County Submitted Innovation Plan: May 11, 2015

Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) vote on Innovative Project: June 25, 2015

Innovative Project Summary

Stanislaus County is seeking MHSOAC approval for the Youth Peer Navigator Project, an integrated youth-centered way to help young people navigate through the Stanislaus County Mental Health services system to improve their mental health and well-being. The County proposes the Project to increase the quality of services, including better outcomes, for young people with a mental illness or serious emotional disturbance, including the many with co-occurring substance abuse. The Project focuses especially on youth with a mental illness who are at risk of or are currently hospitalized in a psychiatric treatment facility or are in custody in the juvenile justice system.

The Project is also expected to improve access to services for this underserved population. Many of these youth have not successfully been engaged by traditional methods, leading too often to more serious illness, aggressive behavior in some instances, and higher rates of re-incarceration or re-institutionalization.

This project was initiated through the efforts of Youth in Mind, a Stanislaus County Juvenile Justice-initiated youth leadership and service program that advocates for children, transition-age youth, and transition-age young adult mental health constituents. Youth in Mind members, many of whom have experienced struggling to navigate the mental health system, theorized that having a peer to support the journey towards recovery would lead to more timely and appropriate linkages, along with more positive mental health outcomes. Based on their experiences, they predict that Youth Peer Navigators will also help youth overcome such access issues as cultural and spiritual barriers, lack of transportation, language differences, concerns about confidentiality, lack of knowledge about where to go, embarrassment about asking for help, and distrust of service providers.

Youth Peer Navigators between the ages of 21-28 will provide mental health education and coaching, linkages and facilitation, and peer support. The Navigators will be carefully selected based on their advanced stage of mental health recovery, which the County expects will have a positive effect their

ability to serve in this role. In order to protect both the Youth Peer Navigators and the youth paired with them, Licensed Mental Health Professional employed by Stanislaus County will provide training and mentoring, supervision, and support.

The Youth Peer Navigator Project seeks to adapt current best practices of existing Peer Navigator programs, primarily by placing Navigators in more diverse settings and providing them the opportunity to work with youth clients of various ages. The Project will also assess the training and support that are most beneficial for the Peer Navigators.

Evaluation:

The county intends to address the following learning questions through its evaluation:

1. Whether and how Youth Peer Navigators are effective within various mental health settings in engaging youth and their families in navigating the mental health system? Are the navigators more effective in specific settings?
2. Do Youth Peer Navigators help youth connect to natural and community supports as well as to other mental health resources?
3. Whether and how Youth Peer Navigators contribute to increased protective factors? If so, which protective factors?
4. Do Youth Peer Navigators contribute to the reduction of clients' criminal recidivism?
5. Do Youth Peer Navigators contribute to the reduction of clients' re-hospitalization?
6. Do outcomes for youth participating in this project vary by age?
7. Whether and how involvement of Youth Peer Navigators affects clients' perception of services?
8. What training, supervision, mentoring, and other supports are most effective in helping Youth Peer Navigators succeed?

The evaluation will utilize a variety of data sources, including but not limited to:

1. Client questionnaires and surveys, including the Developmental Assets Profile (pre- and post).
2. Youth Peer Navigators documentation of client progress.
3. Parents' or other family members' assessment of services and client progress.
4. Linkages to mental health and related services and supports for clients.
5. Incarceration records.
6. Hospitalization records.
7. Electronic health records.