
Advocacy Contract Project: Overview

Background

The passage of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) in 2004 initiated, at the state and local levels, the concept of transparent and collaborative processes being implemented to determine the mental health needs, priorities, and services for California mental health consumers. This collaboration is documented in several Welfare and Institutions (W&I) Code sections.

The Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) is mandated in W&I Code Section 5846(c) to “ensure that the perspective and participation of diverse community members reflective of California populations and others suffering from severe mental illness and their family members is a significant factor in all of its decisions and recommendations.” The advocacy contracts are one means of ensuring that such perspective and participation occurs.

The advocacy contracts also support the statutory requirement in W&I Code Section 5892(d) that the Mental Health Services administrative fund “include funds to assist consumers and family members to ensure the appropriate state and county agencies give full consideration to concerns about quality, structure of service delivery, or access to services.”

As part of the fiscal year 2012/13 State Budget, the Department of Mental Health (DMH) was eliminated and various contracts, services, and budgetary authorities originally granted to DMH were distributed to other state and local entities. Specifically, the funds and authority for advocacy contracts, designed to facilitate inclusion of stakeholders, was transferred to the MHSOAC. As a result, the MHSOAC now manages these stakeholder contracts.

In the fiscal year 2015/16, the MHSOAC was given funds for the inclusion of additional stakeholder organizations, one dedicated to racial and ethnic disparities and the other for a veteran’s organization, to be awarded on a competitive basis. It was decided at this time that current sole source contracts would also be awarded based on a competitive process as of fiscal year 2016/17.

To prepare for the transition, MHSOAC staff has begun to work with current contract holders in a process designed to provide valuable feedback about their experiences to the Commission. To ensure a transparent process, an independent facilitator was brought on to the project to meet individually with current contract holders and to develop a framework for public group meetings. The individual meetings provided an opportunity for organizations to share lessons learned, highlight successes, and discuss challenges. The public group meetings will focus on lessons learned and group discussions on potential opportunities and areas of funding.

The information gathered through this process will help to inform the Commission as the new competitive process is created. The goal of the Commission is to provide a transparent experience that is informed by those currently involved in statewide advocacy efforts.

Project Goals

- ✓ Meet with current contract holders and others to discuss their experiences, lessons learned, and to identify common themes and ideas.
- ✓ Identify areas of shared goals and explore areas of possible collaboration.
- ✓ Identify strategies for the MHSOAC to fortify the effectiveness of mental health advocacy organizations, including potential ways MHSOAC could support and enhance the capacity of organizations.
- ✓ Identify ways to strengthen the working relationship between the MHSOAC and contract holders to ensure contracts remain relevant and effective.

Advocacy Contract Goals

- ✓ Deliverables align with the MHSA and the values of the MHSOAC.
- ✓ Deliverables provide for consumer and family outreach and support so that the perspective and participation of diverse community members reflective of California populations and others with lived experience may be a significant factor in all of the MHSOAC's decisions and recommendations.
- ✓ Provide for consumer and family education, training, and technical assistance to build the capacity of advocacy networks and sustainable local level advocacy efforts.
- ✓ Provide for consumer and family outreach and support to assist with a robust local and statewide stakeholder process.
- ✓ Develop metrics to best document the outcomes associated with mental health advocacy efforts.
- ✓ Identify and explore opportunities for collaboration with other mental health advocacy contract holders.

Proposed Timeline

- August - September 2015: Meet with current contract holders
- Mid/Late September 2015: Conduct first group meeting (establish contract goals/lessons learned/feedback etc)
- Early October 2015: Conduct second group meeting (discuss possible language for RFP/RFA, develop process and parameters)
- November-December 2015: Draft language for RFP/RFA for consideration/Commission approval
- January 2016: Present to Commission at Commission meeting for approval/adoption
- February 2016: Release RFP/RFA
- July 2016: Anticipated start date for advocacy contracts (TBD: contract terms)