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Comments on Lassen County Community Services and Supports Plan

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A few preliminary comments: Lassen County wrote a plan to have a plan. The County has significant challenges: it is a geographically large county with a small population. There is no public transportation system; thus, mental health services are not accessible to the general population. The services provided by the County are neither stable nor consistent. There is no residential treatment facility; therefore, all out of family placements are out of county placements. The Committee was encouraged that the County recognized that out of county placements are not successful treatment options and the goal should be to reduce these placements. The county documented the ineffectiveness of out of county group homes. The Committee would like to see the county likewise track the positive outcomes of a wraparound program—both in terms of the children/youth/family benefits and the fiscal costs.

The committee was pleased to see clear indications of collaboration throughout the process and throughout the plan. The County should be commended for its desire to develop a wraparound program. The County proposed to leverage the new MHSA dollars with existing First Five funds to transform the mental health system for children. Finally, the plan addressed the need to eliminate stigma by offering services and programs at nontraditional sites.

The County did not supply enough detail in their three plans to allow for a thorough evaluation by the CSS committee. The committee will expect more detail in the plan submitted next year, and asks to be informed in a timely manner as plans are actually implemented. Specifically, will the county be able to complete the DMH Chart A that asks for numbers “fully served, underserved or inappropriately served” and identified by ethnicity? Will numbers of consumers served be identified by age? Will the county describe the nature of services provided in each plan?

Historically, Lassen County’s social services and health departments collaborate. Currently, nine different departments work as a team. The County stretched to include stakeholders. The inclusion of stakeholders, family members, consumers, ethnic communities is reflected throughout the plan.

Geographic/Ethnic Outreach—This program will fund mental health services in outlying communities and will develop a framework for expanding service delivery in remote locations. This program is a move toward stability and consistency; it will certainly strengthen the reliability of services. The County has a goal of providing a full array of integrated services. Because Lassen County, in this plan, does know what its target population is, this is a good place to begin.

The services will be located a Family Resource Centers, which will reduce stigma and will enhance access. The County expects to increase the array of services offered to

consumers and their families. The Committee believes that these sites are highly appropriate for these communities, and recognizes the added benefits of reaching individuals and families that may not be comfortable with contacting stand-alone mental health agencies.

Children and Youth Services—The County acknowledges that this plan can also work in collaboration with future prevention and intervention programs. The committee was pleased that the County is leveraging new funds with existing First Five funds to find families in need and provide services; this is transformative. There was concern that MHSA funds would be given to the First Five Commission instead of an emphasis on partnership. The committee would like to see that phrasing corrected. There was also a concern that MHSA funds would be used to fund services that ought to be paid for by the Dept. of Education. However, the committee believes that this plan will reduce the number of young people who need out of home placement if interventions occur early in a child's life. The Committee commends the county for recognizing the critical needs in schools and for children and youth exiting juvenile facilities. Service plans for these populations need to be more fully described. The Committee requests that the OAC Commission be apprised of progress toward full service partnership programs.

Consumer and Family Services Partners—This is a new program which will provide peer support mental health services, among other services. Although the plan was light on details, this is the kind of program envisioned by the MHSA. The County should be commended for undertaking this program. There are, however, concerns that must be addressed: a plan for outreach to diverse populations; what training will be provided; who will the County contract with to implement this program; and where will the resources come from. It appears that the county's emphasis in the initial years will be on identifying the constituencies for this program, and identifying effective techniques to actually attract and serve these constituencies. Can the Committee assume that the values of wellness, recovery, and resiliency are incorporated in this effort? While the county references some specific components of a program plan, such as "consumer training and general community education," there is no explanation of where such material may come from. The Committee would like to know what sources the county may be going to in order to plan and develop programs? What are the county's "best practices" resources? Are there models that the county will look to for guidance?

The committee applauds Lassen County's efforts to transform its system. The proposal sets out an ambitious plan to develop a full service mental health services program. It also proposes an innovative program and an early intervention program. These are the types of programs that the Commission supports.

The Committee would like to see more detail on each of the three programs—what will these programs actually look like, and what services will be available when? We would like the County to work to establish a baseline on their target population, as well as a baseline description of just what the present system offers. Additionally, we would like the County to describe, in some detail, their efforts to hire and train a workforce to carry out the ambitious goals they have outlined.