INFORMATION SHEET

What is Innovation?

Innovation is one of five components of Proposition 63, the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) passed by California voters in 2004. It provides funds and evaluates new approaches in mental health. An Innovation project contributes to learning about and addressing unmet need rather than having a primary focus on providing services.

It's an opportunity to "try out" new approaches that can inform current and future practices/approaches in communities. Like all MHSA components, Innovation projects must be guided by MHSA values:

- Community collaboration - Initiates, supports and expands collaboration and linkages, especially connections with systems, organizations, and practitioners not traditionally defined as mental health

- Cultural competence - Demonstrates cultural competency and capacity to reduce disparities in mental health services and outcomes

- Client/family driven mental health system - Includes ongoing involvement of clients and family members, including but not limited to roles in implementation, staffing, evaluation and dissemination

- Wellness, recovery, and resiliency focus - Prevent mental health problems, increase resilience and/or promote health recovery

- Integrated service experiences for clients and family - Encourages and provides for access to a full range of services provided by multiple agencies, programs and funding sources for clients and family members

Innovation Results:

An innovative project may affect virtually any aspect of mental health practices or assess a new or changed application of a promising approach to solving persistent, seemingly intractable mental health challenges (Section 9, Part 3.2, 5830c). In other words, Innovation projects are developed to target a mental health adaptive dilemma, or a challenge that cannot be resolved through habitual or known responses. The result we hope to achieve is the ***development of new best practices in mental health*** by

- Increasing interagency & community collaboration for mental health services or supports
- Increasing quality of mental health services
- Increasing access to underserved populations
- Increasing access to mental health services

Innovation Strategies:

Innovation projects may employ one of the following strategies to contribute to learning.

- Introduces new mental health practices/approaches that have never been done before

- Makes a change to an existing mental health practice/approach, including adaptation for a new setting or community

- Introduces a new application to the mental health system of a promising community-driven practice/approach or a practice/approach that has been successful in non-mental health contests or settings.

- Innovation projects may impact individuals, families, neighborhoods and communities.

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Priority Learning Edges:

- Learning Edge: a place where focused learning can significantly advance the transformation of the system
- Priority learning edges have been developed to help support and accelerate county-wide transformation
- In past planning processes, BHRS shared priority learning edges at potential contractor outreach workshops prior to release of RFP
- Priority learning edges were developed with stakeholder input, and can be used in the development of Innovation projects.

  - o **Issue:** Connecting people receiving services to community-based supports
    Learning questions:
    - How can people providing services encourage people receiving services to connect with community-based supports that focus on their interests, passions, and strengths instead of their symptoms, illness or diagnosis?
    - Does making these connections to community-based supports improve the experience of recovery and decrease the length of time and intensity of needed treatment?

  - o **Issue:** Honoring and identifying more holistic approaches to well-being
    Learning questions:
    - What will help clinicians and other service providers become more open and receptive to more holistic approaches to well-being?
    - What will help clinicians and other service providers become more able to link their clients to appropriate information and support for more holistic approaches to well-being?

  - o **Issue:** Improving the well-being of children, Transition Age Youth (TAY) and Transition Age Young Adults (TAYA).
    Learning questions:
    - Does strengthening developmental assets at an early age (ages 2 and up) help children in underserved areas improve their ability to thrive in stressful life circumstances?
    - Do strengthening developmental assets for TAY and TAYA in underserved areas improve their ability to thrive in stressful life circumstances?
    - How can social networking technology be used to create support for and promote the well-being of TAY and TAYA?

  - o **Issue:** Treatment options for people struggling with both substance abuse and mental illness.
    Learning question:
    - Can adopting a "harm reduction" treatment strategy for substance abuse issues help improve the overall effectiveness of treatment for people with mental illness and substance abuse?