



MHSA INNOVATION CONCEPT #2 Draft Version 2/10/10

SANTA CLARA COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT

Peer Run TAY Inn

The project introduces a peer mentoring approach into a voluntary 24-hour care setting for high risk transition age youth in crisis with the goal of successfully engaging them and improving their quality of life. The key learning from the project will be to gain knowledge about whether peer informed therapeutic approaches and peer-led decision-making provided in a non-traditional 24 hour care setting are effective in increasing engagement and positive life outcomes for youth.

1. Problem

High-risk transition age youth who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness face numerous barriers to accessing and successfully engaging in mental health services and supports. The consequences arising from failure to engage in and benefit from services are devastating and include: long-term homelessness, prostitution, drug and alcohol addiction, avoidable psychiatric hospitalizations, and incarceration. Currently twenty five percent of youth who are emancipated from foster care become homeless.

2. Barriers

One significant hurdle for transition age youth is that they may not yet have the age-related developmental skills necessary to successfully access services and supports designed for adults. Youth are also especially impacted by stigma associated with mental illness and thus are less likely than adults to access services prominently identified as relating to mental health and delivered in traditional clinic settings.

Transition age youth also report that they want services to be offered by people with whom they identify, such as another young person who shares their life experience. Peer staffing components have only recently begun to be offered in Santa Clara County programs for transition age youth.

The lack of a 24-hour supportive care setting in the county that provides a sense of safety and stability for transition age youth in crisis to recover, limits the degree of success that can be achieved with currently available peer-informed daytime and evening programming.

3. Purpose

The project meets MHSA guidelines by substantially changing an existing practice approach of utilizing peer mentors in a 24 hour care setting to more effectively engage transition age youth. The “Essential Purposes” of this project are to:

- Increases access to services
- Increases the quality of services, including better outcomes

4. Description of the project

The project expands and adapts promising new peer mentoring approaches in a 24-hour care setting designed to promote recovery for high risk transition age youth in crisis. Peer mentors, with support from adult staff, will be responsible for decision-making required to run the inn and the provision of program services. Programs offered at the inn will be informed by wellness and recovery approaches that are effective in helping youth develop skills and increased capacity to achieve life goals. In addition to helping youth stabilize and gain self-awareness and skills in a safe environment, the inn will also serve as a bridge for entry into appropriate ongoing services and supports in the broader system of care. Given transition age youth characteristics, program offerings will relax restrictive eligibility requirements and de-emphasize connections with “mental health services and supports” whenever possible. A process will be developed to enable all providers in the system of care to refer youth to the inn.

5. Contribution to Learning

The key learning from the project will be to gain knowledge about whether peer informed therapeutic approaches provided in a non-traditional 24-hour care setting are effective in increasing engagement and positive life outcomes for youth. Through the experiences of youth working as peer mentors in the inn and its effects for youth being served, data and information can be gleaned and contribute to best practice research.

6. Expected Outcomes and Project Measurement

Learning Outcomes

The key learning from the project will be to gain knowledge about whether peer informed therapeutic approaches provided in a non-traditional 24 hour care setting are effective in increasing engagement and positive life outcomes for youth. Through the experiences of youth working as peer mentors in the inn and its effects for youth being served, data and information can be gleaned and contribute to best practice research.

Service Outcomes

An important outcome of the project will be to increase the number of high risk transition age youth who receive crisis stabilization services provided at the inn.

Specific indicators to measure may include:

- number of youth who successfully complete program and engage in longer-term services outside of inn
- number of youth served who become peer mentors
- increased employment and higher education enrollment
- reduction in EPS hospitalizations and reduced incarceration rates

Project Measurement will be conducted throughout all stages of project implementation using one or more of the following measures:

- Consumer, family, and service provider pre and post surveys
- Data collection
- Project team meetings to evaluate progress and problem solve
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis
- Reports to stakeholders

7. Project Duration and Estimated Cost

\$300,000 per year for 3 years