



MHSA INNOVATION CONCEPT #3 Draft Version 2/10/10

Co-Occurring Mental Health Disorders in Adults with Autism and Developmental Disabilities

This project aims to gain a greater understanding the scope and complexity of treatment for clients with autism or developmental disabilities and co-occurring mental health disorders and pilot an intervention to produce better outcomes for an identified subset of the population. This project aims to promote learning by contributing to best practice research in the mental health field through the identification and piloting of a new or synthesized model of treatment for autistic and developmentally disabled adults with co-occurring mental health disorders.

1. Problem

Individuals with autistic disorders and developmental disabilities are frequently found to have co-occurring mental disorders such as generalized anxiety disorder, impulse control disorders, and obsessive-compulsive disorders. These consumer groups are underserved within the mental health system.

According to the National Institutes of Mental Health individuals with autism often suffer from multiple and severe mental and emotional problems. These include impulse-control disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and mood and anxiety disorders. Such co-existing problems start early in life, are chronic and account for a substantial portion of outpatient, inpatient and residential services. They present immense challenges to clinicians and families, and the complexity of the problem presents enormous research challenges.

2. Barriers

- Lack of awareness and attention to the problem has left a gap in available data and information to describe the scope of the problem.
- Lack of understanding and attention to the problem in the mental health field has led to a failure to identify best practices approaches treat this population.

3. Purpose

Of the four essential purposes for Innovation consistent with Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) guidelines, this project seeks to develop and test a new or synthesized best practice treatment model for adults with autistic disorders or developmental disorders,

and who also have co-occurring mental health disorders. The project ultimately aims to increase the quality of services, including better outcomes for the identified population.

4. Description of the project

The project entails a three-step project to:

1. Conduct a needs assessment to define the problem and the population being affected Santa Clara County
2. Conduct an evidence based review to find out what is currently being done to address the problem and results that are being achieved.
3. Identify a new or synthesized approach to treatment and pilot an intervention designed to achieve results quickly to identify and provide services to a subset of the identified population and study outcomes.

5. Contribution to Learning

The learning from the project will be the information gleaned from the development and piloting of a new or synthesized best practice model of treatment for autistic or developmentally disabled adults with co-occurring mental health disorders.

6. Expected Outcomes and Project Measurement

Learning Outcomes

- Develop an innovative best practice approach for treatment of autistic or developmentally disabled adults with co-occurring mental health disorders.
- Increase understanding about the population of adults with autism or developmental disabilities and co-occurring mental health disorders in Santa Clara County.

Service Outcomes

Improved quality of services and outcomes for autistic or developmentally disabled adults with co-occurring mental health disorders served by the project

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

\$250,000 per year for 2 years