



## MHSA INNOVATION CONCEPT # 6 Draft Version 2/02/10

SANTA CLARA COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT

### **Transitional MH Services for Newly Released Inmates**

This project pilots a new approach to serving newly released inmates with emergent mental health symptoms or other risk factors that predispose the development of mental illness by strengthening existing ethnic community and faith-based efforts to help this population of consumers.

This project identifies and tests whether relatively inexpensive culturally-specific and/or faith-based approaches will increase engagement, prevent the emergence of severe mental health problems and improve standards of living for newly released inmates from underserved ethnic communities with emergent mental health symptoms.

#### **1. Problem**

The Santa Clara County Department of Correction websites indicates the following: approximately 65,000 arrestees are booked annually, the average length of stay is about 110 days, and 80 percent of the population has a history of drug or alcohol related problems. County statistics mirror national profiles indicating that ethnic communities are over -represented in the jails:

- Latino adults are 23.09 percent of the county adult population and yet they are 52.2 percent of the county daily jail population.
- People of African descent are 2.7 percent of the county adult population and comprise 12.9 percent of the county daily adult jail population.

Existing services and supports available through the Santa Clara County mental health system of care to help newly released inmates are at maximum capacity. Funding constraints are a significant barrier for stakeholders attempting to meet the high demand for services. The result is that there are a significant number of newly released inmates in the county who receive no help at all.

New innovative approaches, that do not depend on large amounts of new funding, are needed to help former inmates with a history of addiction and poor mental health cope with the initial stresses they experience after they are released from jail.

Community and faith-based organizations may be well positioned to respond quickly and more effectively to newly released inmates and their family members with initial services and supports due to their proximity, flexibility, and lack of restrictive eligibility and program requirements. They may also be uniquely well-positioned to increase positive outcomes for the population by helping them reconnect to culture and faith.

## **2. Barriers**

Community and faith-based groups attempting to serve newly released inmates have historically been overlooked by policymakers as an important and unique resource potentially capable of increasing the numbers of consumers from this special client population who are served.

## **3. Purpose**

Of the four essential purposes for Innovation consistent with Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) guidelines, this project seeks to increase access to services by introducing an innovative outreach approach offered by community and faith-based organizations to newly released inmates.

## **4. Description of the project**

This project will strengthen existing community and faith-based efforts to reach unserved recently released inmates and their families with voluntary services. The focus of the project is to successfully engage qualified inmates upon release with initial programming to help them reconnect to faith and culture combined with some material assistance to avoid homelessness and recidivism. The project will also provide clients with referrals to longer-term services and supports including those available at the County's Full Service Partnership One-Stop Centers.

The Mental Health Department will explore the feasibility of developing a mechanism in collaboration with the Department of Corrections and other stakeholders to identify eligible inmates with emergent mental health needs and offer assistance/information before their release.

## **5. Contribution to Learning**

The contribution to learning to be gained by the project is an opportunity to test whether a community or faith-based approach results in an increase of newly released inmates with emergent mental health symptoms who are successfully engaged in supportive services. Additionally, the county will gain insight into specific qualities of new community and faith-based approaches that are effective in initial outreach and engagement efforts for this client population.

## **6. Expected Outcomes and Project Measurement**

### **Learning Outcomes**

It is expected that the county will identify aspects of faith-based or culture-specific programming that result in increased engagement and improved outcomes for newly released inmates. Additional learning will be gained by studying whether the strengthening of existing community and faith-based efforts results in greater numbers of recently released inmates being served without large increases in funding.

### **Service Outcomes**

- An increase in the number of recently released inmates with emergent mental health symptoms in Santa Clara County will receive immediate material assistance and help in reconnecting to faith and ethnic communities.
- A decrease in rates of homelessness, recidivism, and incarceration for those 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 Estimate Cost**

\$350,000 per year for 2 years