



STAFF ANALYSIS – EL DORADO COUNTY

Innovation (INN) Project Name: Partnership between Senior Nutrition and Behavioral Health to reach home-bound older adults in need of mental health services

Total INN Funding Requested: \$900,000

Duration of INN Project: 2 years

MHSOAC consideration of INN Project: TBD via Delegated Authority

Review History:

Approved by County Board of Supervisors: June 25, 2019
 Mental Health Board Hearing: May 22, 2019
 Public Comment Period: April 19-May 19, 2019
 County submitted INN Project: September 19, 2019
 Date Project Shared with Stakeholders: May 14, 2019; September 27, 2019; and November 8, 2019

Statutory Requirements (WIC 5830(a)(1)-(4) and 5830(b)(2)(A)-(D)):

Primary Purpose of INN Project:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Increases access to mental health services to underserved groups
<input type="checkbox"/>	Increases the quality of mental health services, including measured outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Promotes interagency and community collaboration related to Mental Health Services, supports or outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Increases access to mental health services, including but not limited to services provided through permanent supportive housing
This Proposed Project meets one of the following criteria:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Introduces a new practice or approach to the overall mental health system, including, but not limited to, prevention and early intervention
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Makes a change to an existing practice in the field of mental health, including but not limited to, application to a different population
<input type="checkbox"/>	Applies a promising community driven practice or approach that has been successful in a non-mental health context or setting to the mental health system
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supports participation in a housing program designed to stabilize a person’s living situation while also providing supportive services on site

Project Introduction:

In collaboration with a community provider, and the utilization of the County's Senior Nutrition Program volunteers, El Dorado County is requesting authorization to use up to \$900,000 of innovation spending authority over a two-year period.

The project proposes to utilize existing program volunteers in the County's Senior Nutrition Program, in partnership with a contracted community provider, to engage older adults enrolled in the program by offering mental health screening, assessment and linkages to other programs and community services for those with behavioral health needs. Through the County's Senior Nutrition Program, program volunteers have formed trusting relationships with older adult meal participants and would like to leverage that relationship as an access point to have a contracted clinician assess and screen older adults who may benefit from additional community resources and behavioral health services in an effort to address the older adult's holistic health.

What is the Challenge or Problem?

The community within El Dorado County has expressed concern over the growing number of older adults which have been deemed to be underserved and in need of services. As part of the County's research for this project, planning meetings were held with service providers for older adults. County behavioral health staff met with veterans, families of older adults, as well as the El Dorado Commission on Aging which acts an advisory board to the County Board of Supervisors. These meetings informed the County to the unmet needs of this target population.

In January 2018, there were a total of 41,258 adults over the age of 65 living in the County, representing over 22% of the County population. In comparison, California's adult population over the age of 65 is nearly 16%. The large number of the aging population has prompted the County to focus its efforts on providing services to its existing and growing population of older adults.

Additionally, the County has received feedback pertaining to potential barriers regarding this population that may inhibit the provision of services. A large percentage of older adults (66%) in the County do not wish to be a burden to others, nearly 50% of older adults did not have reliable transportation and nearly 40% cited a stigma related to mental health (MHSA Older Adults Survey, 2013). Nearly 50% of older adults surveyed indicated they would like to receive information regarding mental health in their home, while 54% indicated they would like to receive mental health information at a community or senior center.

The County has made previous efforts to address the unmet needs of this population with engagement but the County states those efforts have been unsuccessful. The County had utilized a Prevention and Early Intervention program utilizing senior peer volunteers to provide free individual counseling to adults over the age of 55, evaluate the needs of this demographic, and refer them for other services as appropriate; however, those peers were not trained mental health clinicians so there were missed opportunities to engage

and provide treatment for those older adults who presented themselves as having more serious mental health issues. Currently, mental health clinicians do accompany Adult Protective Services Social workers for home visits if the social worker has expressed concern about the mental health needs of the individual they are visiting; however, clinicians that accompany adult protective services are not received as kindly compared with the volunteers who deliver meals to meal program participants.

Currently, the County provides the Senior Nutrition Program to nearly 5% of the County's older adult population, serving an average of 1,917 unduplicated individuals during Fiscal Year 2017/18. During that same fiscal year, 804 received meals in their home and 1,113 received their meals at one of eight specified meal sites within the County. Senior Nutrition Program volunteers have built trust and rapport with Nutrition Program participants over the years. In order to assist in identifying older adults who may benefit from additional screening and assessments, the Senior Nutrition Program volunteers will receive mental health first aid training. Identified older adults will then receive a warm hand off to the contracted provider who will follow up with behavioral health assessments and linkages.

What is the Innovation?

El Dorado County would like to utilize their Senior Nutrition Meal Program volunteers to partner and collaborate with a contracted community provider, familiar with the needs of older adults, by providing a warm hand off of older adults who may benefit from behavioral health screening, assessment, and linkages to community resources.

Research of MHSAs innovation programs did not yield results reflecting the use of clinicians working with County-run senior meal program volunteers which may serve as an access point for older adults who may benefit from links to behavioral health and community services. Canada offers a program that delivers hot meals to older adults and adults who live with a disability; while El Dorado focuses on the needs of older, isolated adults. Research also indicates that older adults who receive meals and attend congregate sites tend to be in poorer health in comparison with older adults who are able to take care of their nutritional needs. Meal programs for older adults are aimed at promoting socialization and overall well-being, decreasing isolation, and may assist in decreasing mortality rates (Kowlessar, et al, 2015). In El Dorado County, current meal program volunteers have built trust and rapport with meal participants and are viewed as gatekeepers for this target population and may at times be the only individuals that meet meal participants on a daily basis. For this reason, meal program volunteers are an innovative access point for identifying those adults – with an unmet need - who may benefit from screening and linkages to community resources. In order to accurately identify older adults who may need links to resources, meal program volunteers will receive training in Mental Health First Aid which will assist volunteers to recognize and respond to signs of mental illness.

The County, through the normal procurement process, will contract with a service provider familiar with the needs of older adults who will be able to screen, assess, identify possible physical health issues, and refer to community resources as needed. The County indicates the service provider will employ clinicians who will be licensed, registered, or

waived. A Waived clinician is an individual currently working towards their Psychology or Doctorate Degree, who is permitted to work up to five years while receiving accrued supervision hours to allow them to sit for their licensing examination. Once an older adult has been identified as someone who may benefit from behavioral health screening and assessment, the meal program volunteer will provide a warm referral to the contracted provider for this project.

The contracted provider will utilize a van, not purchased with innovation funding, which will be outfitted to resemble an office-like setting in order to conduct private screenings and assessments for older adults who were referred by meal program volunteers. The contracted provider/clinician will conduct assessments without the assistance of the meal program volunteers; however, the County indicates that if trust is an issue, the meal program volunteer may work with the clinician for a warmer hand off. The County states the provider would be available daily and would also provide case management and transportation for those older adults who may benefit from resources within the community. For those meal participants who may resist screening and assessment, meal program volunteers will continue to build rapport and encourage individuals to connect with resources as needed.

The County indicates participation from older adults in this project is completely voluntary and those that decline screening and assessment will not be affected by their continuing participation in the meal program.

Learning Objectives and Evaluation:

El Dorado County seeks to determine whether using a mobile approach using a Home-Delivered Meal Program can better engage geographically isolated older adults into accessing mental health services. The County will target older participants of the County's home-delivered and congregate meal site Senior Nutrition Program. It is the hope of the County that upwards of over 1,000 individuals will benefit from the program.

To guide their project, the County has identified five learning objectives. These learning objectives will examine the program's effect in: (1) increasing access to services; including mental health services; (2) engaging older adults into services; (3) the willingness of older adults to continue participating in services; (4) identifying older adults in need of services; and (5) destigmatizing mental health services (**see pg. 13 of County plan**). These learning objectives meet the problems identified by the County, as well as match the primary purpose of the project.

In order to collect the necessary data for evaluation, the County will track and collect information on individuals contacted, numbers of screenings/assessments, number of individuals engaged in services, as well as the number of individuals that attend at least one service. Additionally, the County will administer a survey to determine if participants are less likely to identify stigma as a reason for not seeking treatment (**see pgs. 14-16 of County plan**). An established baseline will comprise of the number of potential participants in the innovation project as well as attitudes prior to engaging in services (learning objective 5).

This innovation project may guide and promote other Counties to seek alternative access points when addressing the needs of specific target populations. At the conclusion of the project, El Dorado County will share findings and lessons learned on the county Behavioral Health website, county Facebook pages as well as with community-based partners. Additionally, presentations may be made to different county organizations, such as the Commission on Aging and/or the Behavioral Health Commission.

Keywords: older adult mental health; rural; geriatric mental health screenings; home-delivered meal program; mobile mental health; access; linkage for older adults.

Additional Regulatory Requirements:

The Community Program Planning Process

El Dorado County held their 30-day public comment period beginning April 19, 2019 followed by their Mental Health Board public hearing on May 22, 2019. Board of Supervisor approval was received on June 25, 2019.

The County sought input from their stakeholders via several community meetings held during the day and evening to solicit robust feedback. The meetings yielded 121 individuals who provided input regarding the established need for the provision of services for older adults. Focus groups were also held which consisted of older adults currently participating in the Senior Nutrition Program as well as County service providers for older adults.

Focus groups reaffirmed findings from the County's 2013 MHSA older adults survey reflecting older adults do not wish to be perceived as burdensome to others, have inadequate transportation, and look at mental health as a stigma and barrier to seeking treatment. As a result of the expressed need for older adults, the County and stakeholders supported a partnership with the Senior Nutrition Program and a service provider as a means of screening and assessing older adults who may be in need of services.

Commission staff originally shared this project with stakeholders on May 14, 2019 while the County was in their 30-day public comment period and comments were to be directed to the County for inclusion, if substantive feedback was given. It is unknown what comments were received directly to the County during their public comment period. The project was again shared with stakeholders on September 27, 2019. Commission staff received no letters of support or opposition from the general public when this project was shared with stakeholders on the two dates referenced above.

El Dorado County received additional technical assistance to finalize their budget and then on November 8, 2019, the final version of this project was shared with stakeholders and feedback was requested to be received by November 20, 2019. The sharing of the project in November 2019 yielded no additional letters of support or opposition received by Commission staff.

As part of MHSA General Standards, El Dorado County will depend upon community collaborations and stakeholder feedback during all phases of this project. The County intends to utilize culturally and linguistically appropriate staff to engage the older adult participants of the Senior Nutrition Program. This project is client-driven and is focused on the needs of the older adult consumers with the support of family members with emphasis based on recovery, wellness, and resilience.

The Budget

The County is requesting authorization to spend \$900,000 in MHSA innovation funding for this project.

Direct costs total \$799,999 and are a substantial portion of the budget (89% of the total budget) and will cover expenditures for the designated service provider. Indirect costs are estimated to be \$89,000 (9.8% of the project budget) and cover items associated with administrative costs and support personnel. A total of \$8,600 (1% of total project amount) is being used towards evaluation and \$3,400 (.4% of total project amount) is being used for administrative costs. **The County may wish to provide evidence that the funds allocated for evaluation are sufficient.** The County will utilize a van, not purchased with innovation funding, which will be fitted to resemble a mobile office.

If the project proves to be successful, the County may consider sustaining this project with the use of MHSA Community Services and Supports or Prevention and Early Intervention, dependent upon the data received and overall evaluation. Pursuant to Assembly Bill 114, if there are reversion funds that are available, the County states they will utilize those funds first. Although Commission staff asked, the County was unable to provide a definitive dollar amount of funds subject to reversion that will (or may) be used for this project.

Review of CCR Section 3930 requirements

The proposed project appears to meet the minimum requirements listed under MHSA Innovation regulations.

Comments:

This project is anticipated to be only two years long, and it remains unclear if that is sufficient time to allow full implementation and evaluation of the project. The Senior Nutrition Program is currently an established program and may identify meal program volunteers as a reliable access point with older adults. Although the County has allotted funding for the evaluation component, **the County may wish to assess whether the budgetary expenditures for the evaluation of this project is sufficient.**

References:

MHSA Older Adults Survey (2013), Retrieved on November 14, 2019 from:
<https://www.edcgov.us/government/mentalhealth/mhsa%20plans/documents/FINAL%20-%20FY%2013-14%20MHSA%20Plan.pdf>

http://www.welldorado.org/demographicdata?id=246§ionId=942#sectionPiece_207

<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/MH/Pages/MHPLW.aspx>

Kowlessar, N., Robinson, K., Schur, C., Social & Scientific Systems, Inc. Older Americans Benefit from Older Americans Act Nutrition Programs (2015). Retrieved on November 26, 2019 from: <https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/programs/2016-11/AoA-Research-Brief-8-2015.pdf>

<https://www.woodgreen.org/services/programs/meals-on-wheels/>