



California  
Charter Schools  
Association

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November 19, 2019

Toby Ewing  
Executive Director  
Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission  
1325 J Street, Suite 1700  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Ewing:

Thank you for opportunity to learn more about the Mental Health Student Services Act (“MHSSA”) and the grant opportunity in 2019-2020. We are excited about this unique opportunity to address the mental health needs of students through cross-agency mental health partnerships. We are especially appreciative of your engagement and the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission’s (“Commission”) efforts to ensure that this opportunity is available to all students in California, including those attending charter public schools.

As the state's leading membership organization for charter schools, the California Charter Schools Association (“CCSA”) would like to provide the Commission with recommendations aimed at ensuring that MHSSA grant funds are allocated in a manner that maximizes equity and impact across all public schools. CCSA’s member schools are engaging their local mental health departments and actively discussing partnerships to expand existing programs and establish new programs.

Given the unique nature of charter schools, CCSA is requesting your consideration of the following to ensure charter school students have equitable access to the grant funds and resulting programs:

- **Instead of allocating all \$40 million at once, allocate a series of smaller grants over a 5 year period. Doing so will increase awareness, spur innovation and ultimately lead to a greater number of partnerships and programs.**
- **Prioritize applications that proposed to expand existing partnerships or create new partnerships.**
- **Given the Commission’s goal to seed programs, prioritize applications that position the charter school as a central hub or that emphasize prevention, early intervention and access to care.**

- **Give greater weight to applicants that have expertise or capacity to blend multiple funding streams, or articulate a priority to award funding to applicants that can provide a match federal funds.**
- **Give greater weight to applications that include effective strategies for making data-driven programming adjustments.**
- **Structure RFP criteria and outcome metrics in ways that allow for cross-county collaboration for applicants that serve more than one county.**
  - Some charter school organizations serve students and have site locations across multiple counties.
  - The MHSSA initially conceived these grants as ones that would be contained entirely within individual counties.
    - However, limiting charter organizations that span multiple counties to grants/partnerships that serve only a portion of their schools/student population greatly limits the effectiveness and the efficiency of this program. Charter organizations are at their best when they are able to scale and leverage resources and best practices across their entire school network.
    - Consider building flexibility into the RFP criteria, process, and/or outcome metrics that would allow for charter networks to collaborate across different county-specific grant projects.
      - If this is not feasible in the initial grant cycle, consider allowing charter organizations with a partnership in one county to "expand" to another partnership in another county in subsequent grant cycles.

CCSA is so appreciative of your time and engagement on this exciting opportunity. We look forward to continued discussions. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or comments. I can be reached at (619) 212-9918 or [gplate@ccsa.org](mailto:gplate@ccsa.org).

Kindest regards,



Gina Plate  
California Charter Schools Association