



STAFF ANALYSIS— MONTEREY COUNTY

Name of Innovative (INN) Project:	Transportation Coaching by Wellness Navigators
Total INN Funding Requested for Project:	\$1,234,000
Duration of Innovative Project:	Three (3) Years

Review History:

Approved by the County Board of Supervisors:	June 12, 2018
County submitted Innovation (INN Project):	July 10, 2018
MHSOAC consideration of INN Project:	August 23, 2018

Project Introduction:

Monterey County proposes to establish a more efficient transportation assistance program for its mental health consumers by adding Peer wellness navigators to provide one to one support and transportation training. Additionally, the County believes that this program will have the secondary benefit of improving consumer confidence not only in terms of transportation to and from therapeutic and other health appointments, but also in areas of employment, life skills, and ultimately, recovery.

In the balance of this brief we address specific criteria that the MHSOAC looks for when evaluating Innovation Plans, including:

- What is the unmet need that the county is trying to address?
- Does the proposed project address the need?
- Are there clear learning objectives that link to the need?
- Will the proposed evaluation allow the county to make any conclusions regarding their learning objectives?

In addition, the MHSOAC checks to see that the Innovation meets regulatory requirements, that the proposed project aligns with the core MHSA principles, promotes learning, funds exploration of a new and/or locally adapted mental health approach/practice, and targets one of the four (4) allowable primary purposes: increases access to mental health services to underserved groups; increases the quality of mental health services, including better outcomes; promotes interagency collaboration; and

increases access to services, including, but not limited to, services provided through permanent supportive housing.

The Need

The County reports that behavioral health staff provide transportation to about 150 Adult Services consumers on a regular and weekly basis. Further, the County reports that at “nearly every opportunity for collecting consumer feedback” (INN, page 3) transportation barriers or inability to get to services because of lack of transportation is identified. The County’s concern is twofold; transportation needs continue to exceed the County’s ability to meet the need and access to therapeutic services is being diverted since behavioral health staff cannot provide timely services and are spending an inordinate amount of time providing transportation (page 3). In order to improve the quality and timeliness of services, the County proposes to establish this transportation coaching service.

The Response

The County reports that in order to address transportation barriers it will first develop a needs assessment tool. This tool will not only assist the peer navigators with specific consumer training needs, but will also be the platform from which the navigator and the consumer will begin to develop other transportation needs (jobs, grocery shopping, socialization activities).

It is the development and use of the assessment tool that distinguishes Monterey County’s innovative proposal from those of either San Diego or Contra Costa County. In its research for identifying if this type of proposal is/was being done elsewhere, the County looked at the transportation projects of these two other Counties. Based on this review, the County states that the other counties intend to establish an infrastructure for transportation, while Monterey is primarily focusing first on an assessment tool that will serve as a platform for peer training and then will inform specific coaching methodologies and objectives that peers will use with consumer riders. The tool will be developed with the support and help from the Consumer Advisory Task Force and can be self, family, clinical staff administered and will be culturally and linguistically appropriate for the population, including the Spanish speaking population.

The concept of coaching/navigator is not new – for years employment opportunities became more accessible to persons with disabilities through the use of job coaches. The Affordable Care Act provided navigators to assist new or never been insured enrollees in getting through the process of signing up for insurance services. The concept of believing or having more confidence in someone who has “been there”, developed in the early 1930’s through the alcoholism recovery movement, has been a very successful recovery model. The Homeless Intervention Program (HIP) of the 1990’s served not only as a precursor to the MHSA, but also introduced the concept of former consumers acting as peer coaches/navigator for other homeless consumers. HIP program peers served as liaisons for the homeless person and facilitated access to all aspects of their life. With the onset of a new way of providing services through the MHSA, the concept of coaches, navigators was strengthened with the introduction of peers providing more than just basic services. In this case, it is anticipated that these Transportation Coaches/Wellness

Navigators will assist with not just transportation needs, but all recovery goals identified on the assessment tool.

As an example of the level of training to be provided for the wellness navigators, they will be trained on taking the bus with the clients, educating clients on how public transit systems work and helping to reduce fears associated with using public systems. Wellness Navigators will also provide a range of peer support services to encourage increased recovery activities and connections to community resources, supported employment, supported education, mental health and substance use recovery groups, and cultural and community events (page 5).

The Community Program Planning (CPP) Process

The CPP for this Innovation was completed in conjunction with the County's Three Year Program and Expenditure Plan planning process. The County conducted 13 focus groups with 232 participants and distributed a community survey, which garnered 214 respondents. Feedback from these groups and surveys indicated that there was a need and desire for more community oriented activities (page 16). Some respondents felt that there was a lack of culturally relevant communication and some respondents felt that due to gang activities they were afraid to go out of their neighborhood.

After this particular proposal was refined, the County held four work group sessions where strategies for implementation and learning goals were better quantified. One of the four work groups was conducted in Spanish. An additional 114 persons participated in the work groups. The project received favorable support from the workgroup and was then presented to the Cultural Relevancy and Humility Committee and the Recovery Task Force. Both of these committees supported the proposal. The County anticipates ongoing community feedback since the grantees will be required to report their activities and that this feedback may help to improve quality of services and other ideas.

Monterey County's 30-day public comment period was held from March 23-April 22, 2018, and the MHSOAC shared this Innovation Project with stakeholders beginning July 20, 2018. It is unknown if any comments or letter were received at the County; however, no letters of opposition or support were received at MHSOAC in response.

Learning Objectives and Evaluation

Monterey County has proposed implementing a project to increase the independent transportation skills of Monterey County Behavioral Health (MCBH) clients as informed by a transportation needs assessment tool. The transportation needs assessment tool will be created in cohorts with the local Consumer Advisory Task force, and will inform how elements of this project will be defined and evaluated. The County will target TAY, adults, and older adults receiving services in MCBH Adult System of Care programs that face transportation barriers. **The County may wish to estimate the number of individuals that may be served annually through the project.**

In order to guide their project, the County has identified 3 learning goals, which include:

1. Assess whether or not the use of the transportation needs assessment tool and subsequent transportation coaching lead to greater levels of independence and recovery reported by participating clients
2. Identify which transportation coaching activities correspond to improved levels of independence and recovery, and
3. Quantify the staffing costs/investment associated with improving a clients' level of independence.

According to the County, the transportation needs assessment tool will not only gauge transportation challenges and barriers experienced by the client, but also their level of transportation-related knowledge and level of comfort. Individuals that go on to receive transportation coaching services will be re-assessed every 3-months by Wellness Navigators. At the outset, baseline data will be created from all participating Adult System of Care clients, and scores from the assessment tool will be utilized to evaluate increases in levels of “independence and recovery.”

Additionally, the County will use a qualitative assessment to evaluate which coaching activities are associated with increases in independence among clients. Lastly, to evaluate the investment in improving client independence, the County will track time and costs associated with each coaching activity. Results from the project and lessons learned will be shared annual MHSA update reports, during presentations to the Monterey County Behavioral Health Commission, as well as with community service providers.

In an effort to promote cross-county learning and collaboration, the Commission may wish to encourage Monterey County to share lessons learned from this project with other counties that may be struggling with similar issues.

The Budget

The County proposes to use \$1,234,000 MHSA Innovative funds over three years for this transportation coaching proposal. County staff costs average about \$65K (including indirect costs) per year for the salaries of an Epidemiologist and the Management Analyst. The budget narrative describes half the Analyst time and all of the Epidemiologist time being allocated for Evaluation activities, equaling \$138,907 over the 3 years.

A community-based organization will receive \$1,009,000 that will be utilized to provide services required in the assessment tool, training, marketing, outreach, service provision and interagency communication. It is anticipated staffing will include a project coordinator and three or more wellness navigators. Additional costs for the CBO include vehicle maintenance fuel, public transportation costs, office expenses, material design and implementation. Peer navigators will be paid between \$16 and \$22 per hour.

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In reference to Assembly Bill 114, the County intends to use funds subject to reversion from the following fiscal year for the following dollar amount:

- FY 11/12 - \$407,256 (half will be applied towards FY 18/19 and the remaining half will be applied towards FY 19/20).

Additional Regulatory Requirements

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

References

<https://www.tpcp.org/programs/peer-navigators/>

<https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/resource-linkages-peer-navigation-facilitators-guide.pdf>

Full project proposal can be accessed here:

<http://mhsoac.ca.gov/document/2018-07/monterey-county-inn-project-plan-transportation-coaching-wellness-navigators-august>