



Creating Common Ground: Advancing Equity in Mental Health Outcomes through Upstream Community Prevention in California

With the widespread impacts that COVID 19 has had across the state, California has an opportunity to recognize the pandemic as a wake-up call to address both the harms that have resulted from it, and the historic inequities that it has exposed and exacerbated. For example, the pandemic has had a larger impact on people of color and communities with lower income including in terms of loss of employment, fewer worker protections, and increasing social isolation. In this context, we find ourselves at a pivot point: county behavioral health and public health agencies have found themselves spread thin, and community advocates and community-based organizations have stepped up to fill the gap and play an essential role in our public health and behavioral health infrastructure. Now is the time to create common ground between county behavioral health and community advocates so that we can move upstream to address and prevent mental health challenges and improve wellbeing with a strong health equity and racial justice lens to create better mental health outcomes for all Californians.

In partnership with California Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC), Prevention Institute is implementing Creating Common Ground: Advancing Equity in Mental Health Outcomes through Upstream Community Prevention in California. Specific activities will include conversations with key stakeholders, regional dialogues, and convenings. to support development of recommendations to the MHSOAC on how to sustain long-term systems change that allows for implementation and funding of community defined evidence practice on a broader scale.

Goal and Outcomes

The goal of this project is to build a shared vision for moving prevention and innovation further upstream. With a focus on upstream community prevention and using a health and racial equity lens, Prevention Institute will engage county behavioral health and community partners to build the capacity of local and statewide partners, including advocates and county departments of behavioral health to advance the shared vision, and develop a set of recommendations for the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission to incorporate the vision into long term systems change.

At the end of the project, we anticipate that we will have created a shared vision that will serve as common ground between county behavioral health and community advocates to achieve greater and more equitable mental health outcomes. We expect:

- A shared vision among county behavioral health and community advocates and community-based organizations on what is necessary to move community defined evidence practice further upstream.
- Improved communication and dialogue between county behavioral health and community advocates and community-based organizations to continue expanding the common ground.
- An increased readiness and capacity among county behavioral health to partner with community advocates and organizations to implement community defined evidence practice.
- An identified set of community-focused metrics or measures to keep prevention strategy moving upstream.
- A set of recommended changes to policies, practices, and regulations to support more equitable mental health outcomes. This may include changing regulations to support upstream prevention and partnership and streamlining contract processes and funding streams to support upstream prevention.

This project is informed by Prevention Institute’s experience supporting networks, multisector coalitions, and public health and behavioral health systems using System of Prevention, the Tool for Health and Resilience in Vulnerable Environments (THRIVE), and the Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience framework to address community trauma; our experience building, implementing, and supporting collaborative partnerships using our Collaboration Multiplier tool; our growing efforts to bridge health equity and racial justice; our work in advancing community approaches to support mental health and wellbeing; and our work with county departments of public and mental health.

About Prevention Institute

Prevention Institute is a national nonprofit with offices in Oakland, Los Angeles, Houston, and Washington, D.C. Our mission is to build prevention and health equity into key policies and actions at the federal, state, local, and organizational level to ensure that the places where all people live, work, play, and learn foster health, safety, and wellbeing. Since 1997, we have partnered with communities, local government entities, foundations, multiple sectors, and public health agencies to bring cutting-edge research, practice, strategy, and analysis to the pressing health and safety concerns of the day. We have applied our approach to injury and violence prevention, healthy eating, active living, land use, health systems transformation, and mental health and wellbeing, among other issues. For more information, visit our website at www.preventioninstitute.org.

For more information

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