

INNOVATION PROJECT STAFF ANALYSIS:

Trillium Drop-In Teen Center

Del Norte County

Total INN Funding Requested: \$448,730

Duration of INN Project: 1 year and 1 month (13 months)

Review History

Public Comment Period: October 21, 2025 to November 19, 2025

Behavioral Health Board Hearing: December 1, 2025

Board of Supervisors Approval: December 9, 2025

Project Introduction

Del Norte County (County) is requesting up to \$448,730 of Innovation spending authority over a period of thirteen (13) months to support prevention and early intervention programming by implementing a community-designed model of care that provides a non-clinical space for individuals to access critical and culturally appropriate services and supports. Del Norte County has a population of less than 28,000 individuals and exhibits unique environmental and cultural challenges in light of its small and rural make-up.

BHSA Alignment and Sustainability

The Trillium Drop-In Teen Center Innovation Project aligns with the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) by focusing on early intervention programming to prevent mental illness and substance use disorders from becoming severe or disabling and to reduce disparities in behavioral health. Upon completion of the project, the county will determine success based on outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and user feedback. If successful, the coaching and peer-led mentoring components of the project could be sustained through future BHSA funds, such as the Behavioral Health Services and Supports (BHSS) component, and/or youth diversion funding. Additionally, other long-term and operational elements of the project may be continually funded through grants from sources including, but not limited to: Federal, state, and local government; private foundations; and/or private corporations.

Statutory Requirements

WIC Section 5830(a)(1)-(4): This project seeks to increase access to services to underserved groups.

WIC Section 5830(b)(2)(A)-(D): This project meets Innovation criteria by introducing a new practice or approach to the overall mental health system, including, but not limited to, prevention and early intervention.

Background

Del Norte County's youth face a major shortage of accessible, culturally responsive, and prevention-focused behavioral health support. As a rural, high-poverty community with high rates of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), many young people grow up without stable emotional support, safe places to spend time, or trusted adults beyond crisis-level services, and most have limited access to enrichment programs or youth spaces outside of sports or discipline systems. The County states that for decades the community has consistently voiced the need for a safe and welcoming place designed specifically for youth. Members of Native and Indigenous communities and other diverse groups, in particular, are in critical need of these services. While programs like Coastal Connections and the Youth Opportunity Center provide important higher-tier services that focus on more targeted and intensive interventions, Del Norte County still lacks a true prevention space where young people can build relationships, learn coping skills, and get help early before behavioral health issues appear and/or worsen.

This INN project will bring a new, community-designed model focused on prevention and early intervention rather than crisis response. By combining trust-building, mentorship, family coaching, and after-hours access, the Trillium Teen Drop-in Center fills a critical gap and creates a foundation for long-term youth wellness to catch problems before they occur, preventing the need for higher-level and more expensive services down the road.

How this Innovative Project Addresses the Problem

Del Norte County's Trillium Drop-in Center introduces a prevention-first model for youth mental health in Del Norte County. Instead of waiting for crises to occur, Trillium creates a safe, youth-led space where early support, mentoring, and community connection happen well before problems escalate. This integrated approach combines social and academic supports using partnerships with programs such as Teen Court and Friday Night Live. This project would be the first of its kind in Del Norte County.

The Trillium project will blend evidence-based practices into one accessible, non-clinical setting where youth can build coping skills, receive guidance from trained mentors, participate in leadership and creative activities, and access mental health and wellness support without fear of discrimination. Family Success Coaches will also help connect families to housing, food, healthcare, and school resources.

By focusing on youth voice, cultural relevance, and relationship-based support, Trillium will be the county's first behavioral health prevention hub to strengthen resilience, reduce the impact of trauma, and reach youth who are often overlooked. This is particularly vital for Native and Indigenous youth, Latino and bilingual families, LGBTQIA+ youth, and those

experiencing homelessness or criminal- and/or foster-system involvement. Services will be offered in English, Spanish, and Yurok, with plans to expand to Tolowa and Hmong.

Community Planning Process

In 2021, Del Norte County performed an extensive community-wide youth needs assessment in preparation for the Yurok Tribe's proposal for funding from the US Department of Education's Promise Neighborhood Project grant. In addition to this information and as part of its Community Program Planning (CPP) Process, the County also interviewed school district staff, the Probation Chief, Chief Judge of the Yurok Tribe, Health and Human Services staff, members of the Board of Supervisors, community-based groups, and systems-involved youth to gather information and collect recommendations on services for youth in at-risk situations. Furthermore, surveys of young people about their views on leadership and community needs were conducted by True North Organizing Network, a local nonprofit organization that empowers individuals of diverse faith traditions, races, cultures, and economic capacities to work collaboratively using a community approach to foster change.

Across all these efforts, Del Norte County concluded that, overall, youth in at-risk situations lack consistent support and safe places outside of home and school environments to spend time with trusted adults and participate in healthy activities. Many youths indicated that boredom and a lack of productive outlets directly contributed to the likelihood of substance use. In response to this need, the Trillium Project was designed with the voices of youth, educators, counselors, parents, and other community members.

The public comment period for this Innovative project proposal occurred between October 21, 2025, and November 19, 2025. It was presented at a local behavioral health board hearing on December 1, 2025, and was approved by the Board of Supervisors on December 9, 2025. Support across the community and its leaders was widespread, and no concerns regarding this project were noted.

Learning Objectives and Evaluation

The overall goals of the Trillium Youth Drop-In Teen Center Project are listed below.

Reduce Impact of ACEs: This goal focuses on creating a supportive environment that ensures access to resources, lessening the effects of ACEs. It also includes a training curriculum for Adult Advisors/Trusted Adults to support youth mental health and prevent negative outcomes such as suicide, violence, bullying, and substance misuse.

Enhance Youth Development: This goal aims to build resilience, self-esteem, and strong social skills in young people through mentorship and positive developmental activities. It also offers training for adults who work with youth to utilize evidence-based practices such as

the Neurosequential Model, Motivational Interviewing, and the Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences framework.

Strengthen Family Support: This goal is centered on empowering families by connecting them with essential services and supportive networks that promote stability and well-being. It also provides space for parenting support groups and workshops that help caregivers build skills and strengthen family relationships.

In addition, this project seeks to measure results using both qualitative and quantitative data sources. **Increased youth engagement** will be measured using attendance logs, repeat visits, youth surveys, Center tracking system, and pre/post program feedback; **improved youth resilience** will be measured through pre/post surveys on emotional regulation and school engagement, standard assessment tools such as the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and the Child and Youth Resilience Measure; **family support impact** will be measured through service access logs, family satisfaction surveys, case manager reports, and referral tracking; and finally, **reduced need for higher level interventions**, such as clinical services and escalated interventions, will be measured by tracking referrals and through coordination with other higher-tier County programs, such as Coastal Connection.

Budget

Del Norte County is requesting authorization to spend up to \$448,730 in MHSa Innovation funding on this project over a period of thirteen (13) months. This project will also be supported by other non-MHSa funding, with approximately eleven percent (11%) of the project supported by Innovation funding. The breakdown of Innovation funding by fiscal year and expenditure category is as follows:

Category	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	Total
Personnel	\$19,575	\$280,852	\$300,427
Operations	\$5,127	\$71,839	\$76,966
Non-Recurring	\$0	\$50,637	\$50,637
Contracts	\$2,300	\$18,400	\$20,700
Other	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$27,002	\$421,728	\$448,730

Sixty-seven percent (67%) of total projected expenditures are allocated for personnel costs. This includes one (1) Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Director to oversee general operations, and administration. It also includes one (1) FTE Program Coordinator who will oversee day-to-day operations, programming, and supervision of volunteers. One (1) FTE Family Success Coach will also be employed to provide assessments and referrals to resources. Additionally, one and one-half (1.5) FTE Youth Mentors will also provide mentoring, tutoring, and pro-social activities for youth. In addition to MHSa Innovation funding, salaries will also be

supplemented by a Klamath Promise Neighborhood grant and the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) Proposition 64 funding.

Seventeen percent (17%) of the estimated Innovation budget is reserved for operational expenses to support meetings and events, supplies, travel, and staff training and development. The Klamath Promise Neighborhood grant will also provide funding to support costs of operations through December 2026. One-time expenses, which include furniture, center improvements, and technology, make up about eleven percent (11%) of the Innovation budget.

The remaining five percent (5%) of project funds will go toward consultant costs and contracts for technical assistance and evaluation needs. Del Norte County will be partnering with True North Organizing Network and the Trillium Teen Center, which hosts community-led and youth-focused wellness initiatives. These contracting costs will cover the program's fiscal operations, data gathering and analysis, outreach campaigns, and reporting requirements.

Conclusion

Del Norte County's proposed Trillium Drop-in Teen Center Project appears to meet the minimum requirements listed under MHSa Innovation regulations and aligns with the goals of the BHSA.