



STAFF ANALYSIS – ALAMEDA COUNTY

Name of Innovation (INN) Project:	Emotional Emancipation Circles for Youth
Total INN Funding Requested:	\$501,808
Duration of Innovation Project:	Two (2) Years, Six (6) Months

Review History:

Approved by the County Board of Supervisors:	July 24, 2018
County submitted INN Project:	August 6, 2018
MHSOAC consideration of INN Project:	October 25, 2018

Project Introduction:

For this Innovation project, Alameda County proposes to take a community defined practice, Emotional Emancipation Circles, (EEC) and “tailor” it to better reach African American young adults. EEC’s are a community defined practice developed by the Community Healing Network (CHN and the Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi) to engage African Americans, (p. 71). The County reports that in its current format, the community practice is geared more towards older participants (p. 78) and that there is an identified sense of isolation and community disconnectedness expressed by younger African American mental health consumers. Additionally, the County proposes that it will evaluate the functional outcomes of program participants, as opposed to the current evaluation system, which only reports participant satisfaction.

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

Alameda County reports that in FY 2016-17, 32% of the 6,188 young adults between the ages of 18 and 30 served were African Americans. The County also reports that despite an increased penetration rate and receiving more outpatient services hours in 2016, African American young adults showed less improvement in their overall mental health. African American crisis services were reduced 17% while crisis services for white young adults were reduced 37%. Similarly, hospitalizations of African American young adults was reduced by 12% while there was a reduction in hospitalizations of 37% for white young adults.

Other feedback received by the County, including the California Reducing Disparities Project, an African American Utilization study, 2011 and a Results Based Accountability process, contributes to the County's need for identifying this particular community of young adults. These documents and processes have identified that the African American young adult community not only feels discrimination and social isolation, but also a lack of trust in mental health services, identifies a lack of cultural diversity among service providers, a sense of not being valued or connected to an inclusive community and an inability to achieve independence and self-sufficiency.

The Response

After looking at various programs related to addressing the needs of cultural specific youth populations, including San Diego's Urban Beats, the City of Richmond's Rising Youth for Social Equity (RYSE) Center and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMHSA) programs, the County determined that these programs did not address the specific needs of young African Americans and/or did not include the measurement tool/capability they wanted to create. Currently the County has 6-8 previously certified EEC facilitators. The County anticipates updating the certificates of these facilitators and will ask two of the facilitators to host six (6) informational sessions throughout the county to recruit program participants.

The current EEC program will be tailored by:

- Initially having trained facilitators working with young adults through a co-facilitated EEC program;
- Developing a method of delivery that is relevant to the young adult audience;
- Incorporating modules such as housing, education, employment into the adapted EEC programs;
- Developing a marketing structure that addresses the young adult audience;

- Offering sessions at age appropriate times and venues, supplying food and transportation assistance, and
- Developing an evaluation tool(s).

Because the EEC program is a community based practice and because its format has been codified, the County intends to ensure fidelity to the essential curriculum but believes that the participants and facilitators can influence how the Seven Keys are introduced into the sessions. The Seven Keys are critical to the program and are defined as:

The Seven Keys to Emotional Emancipation are affirmations of the work required to free ourselves as Black people from the psychological and emotional bondage of centuries of racism. These keys serve as conscious reminders of what we must understand, what we must tell ourselves, what we must seek out, and what we must do in order to free ourselves. They can serve as sources of support in moments of stress, challenge, strain, and whenever we are at risk of slipping into old habits, outdated thinking, and unhelpful patterns. The EEC keys unlock the potential for action in the service of emotional emancipation. <https://blackculturalarchives.org/events/2018/emanicipation-circles-bca>

The County reports that all staff related to this Innovation; the Project Administrator, Peer Project Coordinators and trained facilitators/peers will be African American.

The Community Planning Process

The County reports that during its most recent Community Program Planning (CPP) process for the MHSA Three Year program and Expenditure plan, 60% of young adult respondents reported feeling social isolation or feeling alone. Further, 44% of respondents identified as belonging to an underserved population. This CPP process was conducted from June through October 2017. The County conducted five (5) community forums, eighteen (18) focus groups throughout the County and received community input from 550 surveys.

Proposals were submitted and reviewed by County MHSA staff for Innovation criteria and community priority. This proposal was posted for public comment April 13 through May 13, 2018 and the County received comments about the positive effects of peer run services, the need for measurable outcomes, what will be done to address/reduce attrition and increase support for the project.

The link to this innovation project was also shared with stakeholders on April 18, 2018 while the County was in the middle of their county-level public comment period. The County received and responded to feedback, and a number of letters of support were included with the proposal, but no letters of support or opposition were received at MHSAOAC from stakeholders.

Learning Objectives and Evaluation

Alameda County seeks to implement a project that will make use of Emotional Emancipation Circles (EEC) to meet the needs of young adults, contributing to increased independence and self-sufficiency. The County will target young adults between the ages of 18 and 30 who identify as African American/African descent that experience or are at risk for mental illness. It is estimated that approximately 120 individuals will be served over the span of the project. To guide their project, the County has identified two main learning goals, as well as short, medium, and long term outcomes (**See pg. 73 of County plan for logic model**):

Goals:

1. How can EECs be tailored to effectively engage young adults?
2. Will participants in young adult EECs experience improved mental health and functional outcomes, specifically independence and self-sufficiency?

Outcomes:

- *Short-term outcomes*: EECs reach full registration; participants complete the series (75% of series); participants are satisfied with the EEC experience during the series.
- *Medium-term outcome*: Participants report improved mental health upon conclusion of participation; average participant satisfaction with EEC experience increases between first and final series.
- *Long-term outcome* (3-months post-participation): participants report improved functional outcomes; appropriate use of planned services increases for participants; BHCS clients that participate show better outcomes than non-participating clients.

In order to determine the effect that EECs have on engaging young adults, the County will track participation, develop surveys, and hold focus groups to gather feedback and family member perspectives. In order to determine if EECs improved independence and self-sufficiency among young adults, the County will create surveys and hold focus groups to establish changes in mental health (i.e. measuring well-being, self-worth, connectedness), changes in functioning (i.e. education, employment,), changes in services engagement (changes in services use and patterns), and examine assessments and outcomes to evaluate outcomes for BHCS clients (**see pgs. 80-81 of County plan**).

Alameda County will contract out for evaluative purposes. An outside evaluator will assist the County in finalizing the evaluation plan, gathering and analyzing the data, and completing the final evaluation report. At the conclusion of the project, results and findings will be shared among stakeholders, mental health directors, and among Ethnic Services Managers. Additionally, findings will be presented at various meetings with the MHSA Stakeholder Group, the Cultural Competency Advisory Board (CCAB), NAMI, and the Alameda County African American Health and Wellness Steering Committee.

The Budget

The County is requesting \$501,808 in MHSA funds for this Innovation over 2.5 years. The County expects to use the funds for salaries, wages and benefits, at \$102,374 for a Project Administrator at 0.3 FTE. This represents 20% of the total budget. Operating costs for the program are anticipated to be 11% of the budget. Non-recurring expenses are anticipated to be \$5,000, representing less than 1% of the budget, County administrative costs at \$64,801 represent 13% of the total budget and Consultant/ Contractor (\$184,553 and \$90,000, respectively), costs in the amount of \$274,553 represent 55% of the budget.

The County reports that they will use AB 114 deemed reverted funds from FY 10/11. The County will continue to support this program, based on evaluation results, buy-in from its Children/Youth/TAY and Adult systems of care, the recommendations of the various stakeholder committees and constituencies and funding. It is anticipated that if the program is continued it will be funded with PEI and CSS funds.

Additional Regulatory Requirements

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

References

<https://blackculturalarchives.org/events/2018/emanicipation-circles-bca>

www.ACHSA.org

<http://www.cablackhealthnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/health-report.pdf>

Full project proposal can be accessed here:

http://mhsoac.ca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2018-10/Alameda_INN%20Draft_Transitional%20%20Age%20Youth%20Emotional%20Emanicipation%20Circles_8.6.2018_Final.pdf