



# SHIFTING THE CURRENT

Advancing Mental Health Prevention  
and Early Intervention Using  
Evaluation and Technical Support

2021 PREVENTION AND EARLY  
INTERVENTION FORUM SERIES



Initiated by Senate Bill 1004 (Wiener) in 2019, the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission has been working to explore statewide opportunities to advance prevention and early intervention in mental health. This Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Project is led by the PEI Subcommittee, chaired by Commissioner Mara Madrigal-Weiss and vice chaired by Commissioner Mayra Alvarez.

To guide this project, the Subcommittee has organized a series of public forums to invite input from community members, subject-matter experts, and other stakeholders. Forums are designed to explore ways of using state and local data, evaluation methodologies, and opportunities for technical support to shift the current and move upstream toward mental wellbeing for all Californians.

## Prevention and Early Intervention

An estimated one in five people in the United States live with unmet mental health needs, though less than half receive services. Unsupported mental health needs become more severe over time,

necessitating more intensive intervention and too often result in negative outcomes such as unemployment, incarceration, homelessness, and suicide. Such outcomes impact not only individuals, but also the families, communities, and systems that support them.<sup>2,3</sup>

Prevention and early intervention in mental health refers to a continuum of policies, programs, and services that seek to strengthen protective factors and reduce risk while ensuring timely access to mental health services as need for them emerges.<sup>4,5</sup> Effective PEI initiatives require accurate and reliable information to describe the unique risks, strengths, and needs of people and communities as well as resources, infrastructure, and collaboration to deliver programs and services that address those needs.

With this foundation in place, upstream investments to advance PEI carry tremendous potential to reduce disparities and mitigate the negative consequences of unmet mental health needs.



## Strategies to Advance Prevention and Early Intervention

As part of the PEI Project, the Commission is exploring opportunities to advance prevention and early intervention, including programs and services funded by the PEI component of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA PEI), through a combination of data and evaluation strategies and technical support. This includes the development of a method to monitor risk and protective factors, evaluate MHSA PEI program data, and track negative mental health outcomes. Through broad dissemination, this data can be used to inform local, strategic MHSA PEI program planning and program delivery, and foster statewide collaboration to further advance these efforts.

### PEI Theory of Change

Data monitoring and technical support opportunities are guided by a **theory of change** which indicates that as we reduce risk factors, increase protective factors, and deliver effective PEI programs, we will see an associated reduction in people experiencing unmet mental health needs and negative outcomes, including unemployment, incarceration, school failure, death by suicide, homelessness, removal of children from the home, and prolonged suffering.

## PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION FORUM SERIES

The PEI Subcommittee has organized a series of virtual forums to explore this theory of change and its application. Information gathered from these events will be summarized and integrated into the final project report. Below is a brief description of each forum in the series. For event information and to RSVP please visit [www.mhsoac.ca.gov/news-events/events](http://www.mhsoac.ca.gov/news-events/events).

### Using measures of mental health risk and protective factors to support strategic planning and program delivery

**Wednesday, March 17, 2021**  
*12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.*

An individual's mental health is influenced by a variety of factors related to where and how they are born, grow, live, work, and age. PEI in mental health may be achieved by

identifying and addressing these factors. This forum will explore data-driven approaches to track and disseminate information related to mental health risk and protective factors in a way that supports the strategic planning and delivery of quality PEI programs and services in California. Information will be gathered through a variety of activities including presentations by subject-matter experts, facilitated group discussions and exercises, and post-forum surveys.

### State and local evaluation of Prevention and Early Intervention activities delivered by the Mental Health Services Act

**Wednesday, March 24, 2021**  
9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

California Mental Health Services Act PEI programs vary greatly across the state as they adapt to the unique characteristics, needs, and assets of their local communities. Evaluation of these diverse programs requires methods that are nimble enough to assess the impact of programs on community-defined needs while also measuring outcomes that can be compared across the State. For individual counties, this represents an investment of considerable time and resources. Through a combination of expert presentations, panel discussions with county representatives, facilitated group discussions and exercises, and post-forum surveys, this event will explore opportunities to strengthen and support local evaluation of MHS Act PEI programs and services.

### Opportunities to reduce the negative consequences of unmet mental health needs

**Monday, April 5, 2021**  
12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Described within the Mental Health Services Act, PEI programs and services strive to reduce the negative consequences of unmet mental health needs, such as homelessness, incarceration, prolonged suffering, removal of children from the home, school failure, suicide, and unemployment. Certain groups are at higher risk of these negative

outcomes. By reducing risk factors, strengthening protective factors, and providing support at the earliest signs of need for services, PEI initiatives seek to mitigate these negative outcomes and disparities, especially for those who have been traditionally un- and under-served. This forum will explore opportunities to reduce the negative consequences of unmet mental health needs through multisystem collaboration, support, and data monitoring. Information will be gathered through a variety of activities including expert presentations and panel discussions from representatives of non-mental health systems working to advance PEI, interactive audience discussions and activities, and post-forum surveys.

## REFERENCES

1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Results from the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Mental Health Findings, NSDUH Series H-50, HHS Publication No. (SMA) 15-4927. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2015).
2. Knapp, M., & Wong, G. (2020). Economics and mental health: the current scenario. *World Psychiatry*, 19(1), 3-14.
3. Bloom, D. E., Cafiero, E., Jané-Llopis, E., Abrahams-Gessel, S., Bloom, L. R., Fathima, S., . . . Mowafi, M. (2011). The global economic burden of non-communicable diseases. Geneva: World Economic Forum.
4. World Health Organization (2004). Prevention of mental disorders: Effective interventions and policy options summary report. Geneva: World Health Organization. Retrieved from [https://www.who.int/mental\\_health/evidence/en/prevention\\_of\\_mental\\_disorders\\_sr.pdf](https://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/en/prevention_of_mental_disorders_sr.pdf) on October 8, 2020.
5. Mrazek, P. J., & Haggerty, R. J., eds (1994). Reducing risks for mental disorders: Frontiers for preventive intervention research. Washington, National Academy Press.