

## MHSOAC Research and Evaluation Division Executive Summary

The Research and Evaluation Division guides the Commission’s assessment activities to realize transformational changes across service systems to advance the overarching goal of ensuring that everyone receives timely and effective mental health services when needed. The Division’s contribution is to produce studies that generate new insights, promote continuous learning, and drive improvements in public health and policy. The overall work of the Research and Evaluation Division is led by Dr. Dawnté Early (Chief) and policy research is led Ashley Mills (Research Supervisor). The team includes 13 researchers and staff including some under contract with the University of California, San Francisco.

### Current Research and Evaluation Division (RED) Activities

The Division’s primary goal is described in the Commission’s strategic plan:

*Strategic Goal 2: The Commission will advance data and analytics that will better describe desired outcomes; how resources and programs are attempting to improve those outcomes; and, elevate opportunities to transform and connect programs to improve results.*

The goal is operationalized in three primary activities: The Transparency Suite, data-based policy research, and policy development:

1. **The Transparency Suite promotes understanding and accountability for finances, services and outcomes.** The tools include:

- The MHSA Transparency Dashboard is the home of the Transparency Suite and provides high-level statistics on each county’s service need indicators, as well as MHSA budgets, programs offered, and program outcomes.
- The Fiscal Reporting Tool tracks county revenues, expenditures and unspent funds on MHSA programs.
- The MHSA Program Search Tool allows users to search MHSA programs by fiscal year, county, MHSA component and target population.
- The Full Service Partnerships (FSP) Dashboard provides data on FSP clients and program expenditures by county.<sup>1</sup>
- The Disparities Dashboards provide data on the race/ethnicity, age, gender, and language spoken of persons served in the public mental health system to identify service disparities and underserved populations in each county.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Full Service Partnership (FSP) is a category of allowable costs within the Community Services and Support (CSS) component of the Three-Year Program and Expenditure Plan.

- The Criminal Justice Mental Health Outcomes Dashboard provides information on the demographic and county-level break down of FSP program partners that are included in the Reducing Criminal Justice Involvement for People with Mental Health Needs Project (see more below), and the effects of program participation on criminal justice involvement before, during, and after FSP participation.

These tools extract data from reports that are submitted to the MHSOAC by other state agencies and the counties.

2. **Original research examines the impact of mental health programs and services on client outcomes.** Projects include:

- The Reducing Criminal Justice Involvement for People with Mental Health Needs Project, in which Department of Justice and Full-Service Partnership (FSP) data are linked to better understand the impact of FSP program participation on criminal justice involvement.
- Memorandums of understanding are being pursued with the California Department of Education and the Employment Development Department to receive data and link to Client and Service Information (CSI) and FSP data to better understand how mental health services increase school success and employment.
- The California State Evaluation and Learning Support (Cal SEALS) is a five-year evaluation (2019-2024) of SB 82 Triage Crisis Services programs operating in 20 California counties. UC Davis and UCLA Behavioral Health Centers of Excellence jointly conduct the evaluation in collaboration with the Commission.

The Commission’s Research and Evaluation Team will be presenting at this year’s American Public Health Association (APHA) conference in October 2020 in San Francisco, California. Accepted abstracts for presentation at this year’s conference are:

- Racial/ethnic disparities in psychiatric diagnoses among mental health consumers who report experiencing trauma.
- The intersection of race/ethnicity and trauma and the impact of Full Service Partnerships on reducing criminal justice involvement.
- The myth of the “violent mentally ill” individual and the differences in types of arrests and convictions between those that have received county mental health services and those that have not.

3. **Policy development projects document and recommend effective state and local policies and practices that can drive systems improvement.** Policy research projects use data and research and information gathered through community engagement to explore and translate the challenges and opportunities for improving mental health policy, practice, and outcomes.



The section uses an inter-departmental team approach, leveraging both research and non-research expertise, to conduct the Commission’s policy research initiatives.

The section currently supports Commissioners leading policy research projects on prevention and early intervention, student wellness and school mental health, and workplace mental health. The section works to connect the Commission’s research and evaluation activities with initiatives outside the Research and Evaluation Division, such as the Commission’s youth innovation project and the grants it administers and oversees. Projects include:

- The Prevention and Early Intervention Project, led by Commission Vice Chair Mara Madrigal-Weiss establishes priorities for investment and to develop a monitoring strategy for Prevention and Early Intervention, as directed by Senate Bill 1004 (Wiener, 2018).
- The Schools and Mental Health Project, led by Commissioner and Sacramento County Superintendent of Schools, Dave Gordon seeks to enhance wellness and academic success for K-12 students by building sustainable partnerships between education, behavioral health, and community providers.
- Workplace Mental Health, led by Commissioner Keyondria Bunch develops workplace standards which aim to reduce mental health stigma, increase public, employee, and employer awareness of the significance of mental health, and create avenues to treatment, support, and recovery.

The section also supports the implementation of completed policy research projects on criminal justice and mental health and suicide prevention. Activities include working with the Commission’s Chief of Communication and other internal and external partners to disseminate findings and recommendations from *Together We Can: Reducing Criminal Justice Involvement for People with Mental Illness* and *Striving for Zero: California's Strategic Plan for Suicide Prevention 2020-2025*, presenting the Commission’s policy research work, testifying before the Legislature on behalf of the Commission, supporting the Executive team in providing technical assistance on policy bills, and supporting the Chief of Innovation Incubation to implement the Commission’s Innovation Incubator to reduce criminal justice involvement.

## **Appendix: Past Research and Evaluation Projects**

Since its inception, the Commission (and formerly the California Department of Mental Health) has contracted with California universities and other consultants to evaluate components of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). The following lists those projects in chronological order.

- 1. The Community Wellness Project (2018-2020)**  
**UCLA Center for Health Services and Society**  
**Principal Investigators Dr. Bonnie Zima and Dr. Sheryl Kataoka**  
Objective: Identified key metrics of the negative outcomes of mental health needs and unmet needs in California and other population health measures for mental health program client populations.
- 2. The Full Service Partnerships (FSP) Pilot Classification/Analysis Project (2018-2019)**  
**Mental Health Data Alliance**  
**Principal Investigator: Dr. Kate Cordell**  
Objective: Created an inventory of FSP program-level attributes by linking county mental health provider indicators to program- and individual-level client data to examine client early exit reasons.
- 3. The MHSA Community Services and Support (CSS) Toolkit Project (2016-2017)**  
**UC, San Diego Health Services Research Center**  
**Principal Investigator: Dr. Andrew Sarkin**  
Objective: Assisted county behavioral health departments in assessing the feasibility of adopting and implement CSS tracking, monitoring, and an evaluation system designed to enable providers, counties, and the state to understand the clinical and functional status of clients within individual outcomes. Created a toolkit for county staff and stakeholders.
- 4. Evaluation of Early Psychosis (2015-2017)**  
**University of California, Davis**  
**Principal Investigator: Dr. Tara Niendam**  
Objective: Designed a statewide evaluation strategy for programs addressing early psychosis.
- 5. Assessment of System of Care for Older Adults (2015-2017)**  
**UCLA Center for Health Policy Research**  
**Principal Investigator: Dr. Janet Frank**  
Objective: Examined the current state of the state on mental health service provision to older adults by identifying older adult needs, indicators, screening tools and promising programs.
- 6. Recovery Orientation of Programs Evaluation (2015-2017)**  
**University of California San Diego, Health Services Research Center**  
**Principal Investigator: Dr. Todd Gilmer**  
Objective: Identified, described and assessed existing measures and methods for evaluating recovery programs and services, and provided recommendations and resources to providers, counties, and the state regarding measures and methods for evaluating recovery.

7. **Return on Investment for Evidence-based PEI Practices (2015-2017)**  
**Trylon Associates, Inc.**  
**Principal Investigator: Dr. Elizabeth Harris**  
Objective: Conducted an environmental scan and survey to categorize PEI programs and activities.
8. **Full-Service Partnerships (2014-2017)**  
**Mental Health Data Alliance**  
**Principal Investigator: Dr. Kate Cordell**  
Objective: Assessed Full Service Partnerships (FSP) statewide and classified them in a meaningful and useful way that enabled clients, family members, providers, counties, stakeholders, and the State to understand the diversity of FSPs and be able to make comparisons across programs.
9. **MHSA Community Services and Support (CSS) Tracking and Monitoring (2014-2016)**  
**UC, San Diego Health Services Research Center**  
**Principal Investigator: Dr. Andrew Sarkin**  
Objective: Developed a tracking, monitoring, and evaluation system for CSS programs. The MHSOAC initiated this project to enhance the Commission's ability to conduct oversight of the MHSA and the mental health system through improved evaluation capacity.
10. **The Advanced Planning Document (2014-2015)**  
**Stewards of Change Consulting, LLC**  
Objective: Assessed the California public mental health and substance use data collection systems and ascertained what needed to be accomplished to ensure that the Commission has the data needed to perform its statutory role.
11. **Evaluation of Innovation Projects (2013-2016)**  
**California Institute for Behavioral Health Solutions**  
**Principal Investigator: Dr. Karen Linkins**  
Objective: Evaluated innovation projects funded by the MHSA and provided technical assistance to counties to promote adoption of successful innovation practices.
12. **Evaluation of the MHSA Community Program Planning Process (2013-2014)**  
**Resource Development Associates**  
**Principal Investigator: Jennifer Susskind**  
Objective: Examined the Community Program Planning Process across the State and identified data driven strategies that predicted positive and replicable outcomes.
13. **Client Services Information (CSI) Data Quality Improvement Effort (2013-2014)**  
**Mental Health Data Alliance**  
**Principal Investigator: Dr. Kate Cordell**  
Objective: Strengthened statewide data collection and reporting systems by developing county-level CSI data quality reports and disseminating those reports to the counties; created statewide CSI data quality report that included best collection/reporting practices; developed

a tool to help counties independently analyze their own data; and created an information sharing link between CSI and DCR systems.

**14. Strengthening the Data Collection and Reporting (DCR) IT System (2013-2014)**

**Mental Health Data Alliance**

**Principal Investigator: Kate Cordell**

Objective: Provided IT support to implement specific data quality improvements to the DCR system that were identified by California State University, Sacramento through the DCR Data Quality Improvement Effort.

**15. The MHSOAC Evaluation Master Plan (2013)**

**Principal Investigator: Dr. Joan Meisel, Independent Consultant**

Objective: Charted the Commission's course on evaluation activity for the next 3-5 years.

**16. Reducing Disparities in Access to Mental Health Care (2012-2014)**

**UC Davis Center for Reducing Health Disparities**

**Principal Investigator: Dr. Sergio Aguilar-Gaxiola**

Objective: Evaluated the impact of the MHSA on reducing disparities in access to mental health services.

**17. Evaluation of Prevention and Early Intervention Programs, MHSA Evaluation Phase II (2011-2014)**

**UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities**

**Principal Investigator: Dr. Todd Franke**

Objective: Examined PEI expenditures, programs/activities and participant demographics.

**18. Evaluation of Full Service Partnerships, MHSA Evaluation Phase III (2011-2013)**

**UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities**

**Principal Investigator Dr. Todd Franke**

Objective: Examined FSP service costs and client outcomes for fiscal years 2008-09 and 2009-10.

**19. Disparities in Access and Delivery of Services (2009-2010)**

**UC Davis Center for Reducing Health Disparities**

**Principal Investigator: Dr. Sergio Aguilar-Gaxiola**

Objective: Measured utilization rates using GIS mapping in Stanislaus, Santa Clara and Orange County and examined social context and determinants of each region.