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# **Overcoming Transportation Barriers Executive Summary**

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Contra Costa  
Behavioral Health  
Services

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Contra Costa Behavioral Health Services (CCBHS) intends to use the Innovation project, *Overcoming Transportation Barriers*, to address the transportation and access challenges and recommendations identified by its Transportation and System of Care Committees. This proposal is innovative because of the new and different way in which both peer support workers and transportation resources will be coordinated and utilized. The primary purpose of the Innovation project is to increase access to mental health services. *Overcoming Transportation Barriers* will make a change to an existing practice in the field of mental health by adapting the role of peer support workers to coordinate transportation efforts and resources, help consumers build self-sufficiency and apply independent travel skills.

In its publication, *Getting There: Helping People With Mental Illnesses Access Transportation*, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services highlights the effectiveness of utilizing peers to operate transportation programs<sup>1</sup>. It also emphasizes the importance of coordinating existing transportation resources<sup>2</sup>. An evaluation of San Diego County's *Mobility Management in North San Diego County* Innovation project found the use of volunteer travel trainers increased the number of people able to utilize the transit system<sup>2</sup>. Building upon the recommendations from SAMHSA and the lessons learned from existing programs, Contra Costa County stakeholders proposed adapting the existing models by utilizing peer support workers to not only provide training and transportation, but to analyze and coordinate existing transportation resources, making the entire project peer-led. *Overcoming Transportation Barriers* is not just a transportation program; it is a systematic approach to developing an effective consumer-driven transportation infrastructure supporting the entire mental health system of care. Because the approach is making a change to an existing practice, and thereby presents an opportunity for the system of care to learn from a new approach, stakeholders recommended the proposed project developed through the research efforts of local committees be funded by Innovation.

The proposed length of time for the project is four years. The project will target clients throughout CCBHS' mental health system of care. Peer support workers will serve as regional transportation coordinators who will review, analyze, and support existing transportation resources, as well as cultivate new transportation resources and link clients to needed resources. This proposal is innovative because it employs both peer support workers and transportation resources in a new and different way. *Overcoming Transportation Barriers* proposes using the three peer transportation coordinators to implement the following innovative patterns of service:

- 1) Collaborate on an ongoing basis with clinic peer support workers, family partners and case managers to assess client and family readiness, ability and capacity to take or access public transit, support individuals and families in building independent travel skills, when appropriate applying a vocational services job coaching model to independent living skills building activities, and establish and strengthen community networks and relationships with transportation providers to explore alternate modes of transportation;
- 2) Provide system navigation support for individuals and families who have access to personal vehicles and collaboratively problem solve issues, and educate individuals and families about the financial impacts of late fees and transportation safety for children;
- 3) Evaluate safety concerns raised by consumers and families, and support the development of solutions to address concerns related to public transit; act as a liaison between County, service providers, schools and transit authorities, as well as act as the County representative in community forums related to transportation;

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<sup>1</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Center for Mental Health Services. *Getting There: Helping People with Mental Illness Access Transportation*. 2004. Available at: <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA04-3948/SMA04-3948.pdf> . Accessed on January 7, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> County of San Diego Behavioral Health Services, Behavioral Health Division, Quality Improvement Unit. "Mental Health Services Act Innovation Projects Evaluation 2013". San Diego County. 2013. Available at: [http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/hhsa/programs/bhs/documents/Innovation\\_Evaluation\\_Report.pdf](http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/hhsa/programs/bhs/documents/Innovation_Evaluation_Report.pdf) . Accessed on January 7, 2016.

- 4) Create a Social Inclusion Transportation Subcommittee to problem solve common public transit challenges and create advocacy for needed changes in the public transit system for adults, youth, and families;
- 5) Assist CCBHS efforts to regularly analyze existing County system-wide transportation and public transit resources, and make recommendations on how to address emerging transportation needs and opportunities.
- 6) Implement a transportation hotline for consumers and families to seek out resources and information regarding various transportation options, including providing information on community resources, connecting individuals and families with additional resources related to safe transportation, and brokering services related to routine vehicle maintenance;
- 7) Assist in the coordination of efforts to collaborate shared van rides for community events and to facilitate the opportunity to take loved ones to see their family members who have been placed in facilities that are either out-of-county or where public transit is unavailable; and
- 8) Provide on a limited, as needed basis, transportation to and from mental health appointments for those clients and families who are unable to take public transit, and for whom the clinic is unable to provide transportation using existing transportation resources.

The peer support workers employed as transportation coordinators will be part of CCBHS' Office for Consumer Empowerment, which provides leadership and staff support to a number of initiatives designed to: a) Reduce stigma and discrimination; b) Develop leadership and advocacy skills among consumers of behavioral health services; c) Support the role of peers as providers; and d) Encourage consumers to actively participate in the planning and evaluation of MHS funded services. Strategies developed as part of *Overcoming Transportation Barriers* will inform and be informed by these existing initiatives. The transportation coordinators will have received Service Provider Individualized Recovery Intensive Training (SPIRIT), a college accredited, recovery-oriented, peer-led classroom and experiential-based program for individuals with lived mental health experience. Participants learn peer counseling skills, group facilitation, Wellness Action Plan (WRAP) development, wellness self-management strategies and other skills needed to gain employment in peer provider positions in both county-operated and community based organizations.

If *Overcoming Transportation Barriers* proves effective, it will: 1) Improve the efficiency of current transportation resource utilization; 2) Improve access to services; 3) Decrease no show rates at the County-operated clinics; 4) Address safety concerns related to independent travel for consumers and families; 5) Support clients in addressing and reducing internal stigma; and 6) Promote engagement in meaningful activity and social engagement by developing life skills and combating isolation, which in turn leads to improvements in mental health outcomes.

CCBHS intends to use *Overcoming Transportation Barriers* to determine if using three regionally based peer support workers to coordinate transportation resources improves access to mental health services. The County wishes to learn if and how using peer support workers to coordinate transportation resources will: 1) improve access to mental health services; 2) improve system navigation; and 3) improve independent living and self-management skills among clients.

*Overcoming Transportation Barriers* will address the following learning goals:

- Does the addition of 3 regional peer support worker transportation coordinators improve the efficiency of current transportation resource utilization?
- Do less clients report transportation as a barrier to accessing services?
- Do clients develop life and self-management skills, including system navigation?
  - Do consumers use them regularly and how can we increase their utilization?
- Is there an increase the number of clients able to access transportation resources?

- Do clients report an increased ability to access mental health and support services?
- Do mental health clinic no show rates decrease?

The target population for *Overcoming Transportation Barriers* is clients of all ages and families served by the county-operated mental health clinics and, potentially, those served by the community-based providers as well. CCBHS serves approximately 20,000 individuals with a serious mental illness or severe emotional disturbance each year. Approximately 13,800 of these individuals are served by the county-operated mental health clinics. The program will provide services to individuals from all geographic regions of Contra Costa County, racial and ethnic groups as well as diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions. CCBHS intends to hire at least one Spanish-speaking transportation coordinator. Additionally, CCBHS offers interpretation and translation services for providers as needed. CCBHS contracts with community-based organizations with expertise in serving the diverse populations found within Contra Costa County, including refugee populations. If transportation coordinators require assistance or training around addressing culturally-specific barriers, the coordinator will collaborate with the appropriate community-based agencies and/or county programs to develop a plan for addressing the barriers.

Upon MHSOAC approval of use of MHS Innovation Component funding, the CCBHS will take up to six months to create positions, recruit and hire staff. It is anticipated that project implementation will not begin until after January 2017. Project implementation will then take up to three years to determine impact on rates of service utilization. The fourth and final year of the Innovation project will focus on integrating the lessons learned into the system of care, creating a plan for sustaining the effective elements of the project, and sharing the lessons learned about the replicability of the model (if proven successful). If the project is unsuccessful, the vehicles purchased for the project will become part of the existing fleet of Mental Health Services Act (MHS)-funded vehicles and assigned to support one or more program(s) within the CCBHS mental health system of care.

The intervention will be articulating a set of strategies to improve access to services by coordinating and more effectively utilizing existing transportation resources as well as addressing life skills development. Strategies may include warm hand-offs to services, providing clients transportation assistance and/or teaching them to utilize existing transit options, developing life skills, modifying transportation policies and linking clients and families to transportation resources in the community, such as ride shares. Outcomes will also be tracked that compare service utilization and no show rates before and after the innovation project intervention. Outcomes include the number of clients, mode of transportation, improved transportation utilization/self-management skills, service utilization rates and no show rates. Both qualitative and quantitative data will be collected in order to determine how clients access services and how this project can improve their access. Additionally, the project will document changes in transportation policies and practices. The supposition is that adding transportation coordination services to the menu of services available for mental health clients and their families will result in improved access to services, increased service utilization, and decreased no show rates. Future community program planning processes will gauge the efficacy of these new services from the perspectives of stakeholders.

The total projected cost of *Overcoming Transportation Barriers* is \$1,023,346. The annual project cost for the first year of the project is \$314,830. The annual project cost for year's two through four is \$236,172 a year. The budget consists of personnel and operating costs, including the purchase of three vehicles. Evaluation costs for this project are included in a County Planner/Evaluator position assigned to evaluate the Innovation Projects contained in CCBHS' MHS Three Year Plan.