



## **MHSA Innovations Funding, Round 2 The African American Utilization Report Learning Questions**

### **INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS June 2011**

#### **Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Innovations (INN) Funding**

MHSA INN funding is intended to provide the mental health system with an opportunity to learn from innovative approaches. Funding is provided for an 18 month period, with the expectation that a grant recipient will submit a report of findings before the end of that period. The INN funding is not designed to support existing or ongoing programs or services, but to provide our system with innovative demonstration projects that will support system change and improve client/consumer outcomes.

In our first round of INN funding, each of the mini-grants was awarded based on a learning question posed by the bidder, coupled with the bidder's innovative approach designed to answer that question. Though the mini-grants were all quite worthy, Behavioral Health Care Services (BHCS) and the MHSA Ongoing Planning Council (OPC) learned from this initial process that our funding criteria were too broad. These overly-broad criteria resulted in an overwhelming number of proposals, many of which did not help us address issues facing our system of care. BHCS received bids totaling \$25 million for a \$1 million funding resource. This was a valuable learning experience for us.

With this second round of INN funding, BHCS leadership agreed that staff, with input from the OPC, should formulate learning questions, the answers to which would address system problems, such as those raised in the African American Utilization Report, improve the quality of care to that population and produce more positive client/consumer outcomes.

#### **The African American Utilization Report**

Alameda County has historically served African Americans for behavioral health issues at a disproportionately higher rate than other members of our community, yet the outcomes are inconsistent. In late 2009, BHCS leadership commissioned a study to address and explore the myriad issues affecting behavioral health care services in Alameda County within the African American community. The process was led by a local facilitation team, working with the BHCS Ethnic Services Manager/Cultural Competency Coordinator and a 29-member committee. Input was solicited from a full spectrum of community stakeholders and subject matter experts regarding ways to resolve these disparities and deliver more effective, culturally appropriate care.

The African American Utilization Report contains the Committee's findings and recommendations and serves as the foundation for the Innovations Grants, Round Two Learning Questions. Our overarching goal is to decrease African American utilization of more restrictive and often involuntary levels of care by providing and engaging African Americans in more culturally responsive services that result in improved client/consumer outcomes and reduced disparities.

BHCS leadership views the implementation of the report's recommendations as a system-wide Quality Improvement (QI) effort for those activities within the scope, ability, and responsibility of BHCS to implement. QI staff are completing a grid that will articulate and provide a mechanism for tracking all current and proposed activities related to the report's recommendations, as well as the expected outcomes for each.

In reviewing the report, several areas of focus emerged – workforce development, clinical trainings and practices, outcome measures - that could be implemented through existing BHCS programs such as workforce development, training and quality improvement. For the Innovations Grants, Round Two, BHCS leadership identified as priorities those recommendations that would have the greatest impact on our system and spanned all four systems of care. We created the learning questions to address four critical needs:

- Developing culturally responsive practices;
- Strengthening our partnership with the faith-based community;
- Supporting trauma informed care that recognizes the trauma related to social issues within the African American community and
- Engaging African American males in their health care.

## Key Elements of the Learning Questions

***Each desired outcome is designed to produce tangible organizational assets – a training curriculum, program design or engagement strategies and tools - that BHCS can use to change our system.*** Whether it is training providers and changing practices, building effective partnerships with the faith-based community, developing trauma informed care practices or improving client/consumer engagement in their health care, our overarching goal is to reduce disparities and improve outcomes for the African American clients/consumers in our system.

***Field testing is required for each learning question.*** Field testing is defined as testing a technique or product under conditions of actual operation or use. Field testing will ensure that the outcomes and assets for each learning question, i.e. a training curriculum, program design or set of strategies, have been tested and vetted by those who will use them. Field testing may include focus groups, facilitated discussions, curriculum review or other similar activities involving the groups and individuals identified in each learning question. Relevant and appropriate field testing must be concluded before the end of the grant period to ensure that findings and lessons learned are incorporated into the final outcome and grant report.

***Priority will be given to proposals that reflect integration and partnership among applicants.*** Educational and cultural institutions; faith-based and spiritual organizations; provider and professional organizations; community organizations; County departments and individual content experts are encouraged to partner with local community-based agencies and community members and to submit proposals that illustrate these partnerships.

***Programs, practices and/or approaches that are related to the learning questions and have been implemented in other places or jurisdictions may be used as a reference for a proposal.*** However, BHCS Innovations proposals must identify the out of state program, practice and/or proposal and describe how it will be adapted for use in Alameda County. All proposals must incorporate the principles of 'innovation' as set forth in our MHSA INN Plan and the specific characteristics of Alameda County's African American community and BHCS clients/consumers as defined in the African American Utilization Report.

## **The African American Utilization Report Learning Questions**

1. "What are the cultural and spiritual nuances, beliefs, practices and norms specific to the African American community that should be incorporated into the planning, delivery, and outcomes of mental health and co-occurring conditions services for this community?"

One or more of the following age groups should be specifically addressed:

- a. Children
- b. Youth/Transition Age Youth
- c. Adults
- d. Older Adults

*Desired Outcome:* Age-based, culturally-informed provider training curriculum designed to improve effectiveness of behavioral health care services to African American Behavioral Health Care Services (BHCS) clients/consumers and their families that has been 'field tested' and evaluated by BHCS clients/consumers, family members and County and contracted community-based providers.

Funding Available: \$400,000

Proposals may include one or more age groups. For proposals that integrate more than one age group, all domains of the learning question and the desired outcome must be included.

2. "How can the mission, services and purpose of BHCS be enhanced through partnerships with African American faith-based and spiritual communities as cultural institutions and natural places for BHCS clients/consumers and families to receive supports in their community?"

"What are effective ways for the African American faith-based and spiritual communities to welcome and integrate mental health clients/consumers into their community and to support social inclusion, decrease stigma and discrimination and provide a safe place for people to receive services and support, outside of the behavioral health care system?"

*Desired Outcome:* A program design that includes a set of specific strategies for the development of an effective partnership between the African American faith-based and spiritual communities and BHCS, capitalizing on the role of these communities as cultural institutions and a natural support for BHCS clients/consumers and their families. The program design must be 'field tested' and evaluated by local faith-based and spiritual community organizations; cultural and community organizations and BHCS clients/consumers, family members and County and contracted community-based providers.

Funding Available: \$300,000

Proposals that demonstrate integration and collaboration among African American faith-based and spiritual communities, local community organizations and BHCS clients/consumers and family members are encouraged and will be given priority.

3. “How might the practice-based evidence, evidence based practices and community-defined strategies of trauma-informed care for African American BHCS clients/consumers and families address the African American community’s historical trauma and trauma related to social issues, like stigma, discrimination, violence and poverty?” One or more of the following age-groups should be specifically addressed:
  - a. Children
  - b. Youth/Transition Age Youth
  - c. Adults
  - d. Older Adults

*Desired Outcome:* Development of an age-based provider training curriculum designed to increase BHCS capacity and expertise on trauma informed care for BHCS African American clients/consumers and families that has been ‘field tested’ and evaluated by BHCS clients/consumers, family members and County and contracted community-based providers.

Funding Available: \$400,000

Applicants may submit proposals that include one or more age groups. For proposals that integrate more than one age group, all domains of the learning question and the desired outcome must be included.

4. “What are effective strategies and supports for medically underserved African American adult males with serious mental illness, including those with co-occurring conditions, which will improve their engagement in behavioral health and primary care services?”

*Desired Outcome:* Development of a set of specific strategies, supports and recommendations that will improve the engagement of African American adult males in behavioral health and primary care services that have been ‘field tested’ with BHCS African-American clients/consumers and County and contracted community-based providers and primary care providers.

Funding Available: \$300,000

## **BHCS Innovations Grants, Round Two Application Information**

BHCS has made the following changes to the grant process for the second round:

- Applicants must respond to a specific learning question, rather than creating their own learning question.
- This funding cannot and will not be used to support ongoing services or programs; grants are designed to develop tangible assets that BHCS can use to change our system.
- Grants will not be defined or selected according to a specific funding amount, i.e. small, medium or large.
- Each learning question has been assigned a total funding amount. Proposals that request the full amount of funding available for a specific learning question must incorporate all desired outcomes of that learning question.
- Interested applicants may submit proposals for more than one learning question; however, a separate and complete proposal is required for each learning question.
- BHCS cannot contract with an individual for these grants. Individual applicants must submit a proposal under the auspices of a legal entity.

Interested applicants should review the BHCS African American Utilization Report prior to submitting a proposal. The report is available online on the BHCS Innovations website <http://www.acinnovations.org/> The report will be used in the review of applications and the selection of awardees.

### **Proposals and the Application Process**

Proposals must address all domains of a specific learning question. The application will be available on the BHCS Innovations website the first week of July. Interested individuals can sign up on the Innovations website to receive email notifications about the application process.

### **Application Review and Selection Process**

All proposals will receive a technical review by BHCS MHSAs and Quality Improvement staff and selected proposals will be distributed to the BHCS Innovations Board for scoring. Individuals with content expertise related to the African American Utilization Report and the four learning questions will be added to the Innovations Board for this round of applications.

Proposals selected by the Innovations Board will be forwarded to the BHCS MHSAs Ongoing Planning Council (OPC) for review. OPC members and/or content experts who have either submitted or participated in a proposal will not be allowed to review any proposals. OPC final recommendations will be provided to BHCS Administration. BHCS staff will work with awardees to develop contracts and arrange funding.