

## MHSA INNOVATION FACT SHEET

### **What are “MHSA Innovation Projects”?**

The Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Innovation component is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of new and/or changed practices or strategies in the field of mental health, with a primary focus on learning and process change, rather than filling a program need or gap. As such, Innovation strives to change some aspect of the public behavioral health system that may include system or administrative modifications.

Five percent of the MHSA funds are dedicated to the Innovation component. Innovation projects are time-limited to a maximum of five years, after which successful approaches, strategies or elements may be integrated into existing programs or continued through an alternative source of funding.

### **What are the Requirements to Use MHSA Innovation Funds?**

Each project must be approved by the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC). According to the [MHSA Innovation Project Regulations](#), each project must focus on mental health, identify an innovative component and clearly state the learning objectives. An Innovation project is required to contribute to learning in one or more of the following ways:

- Introduce a mental health practice or approach that is new to the overall mental health system, including, but not limited to, prevention and early intervention
- Make a change to an existing practice in the field of mental health, including, but not limited to, application to a different population
- Apply to the mental health system a promising community-driven practice or approach that has been successful in non-mental health contexts or settings

In addition, an Innovation project should serve one or more of the following purposes:

- Increase access to mental health services to underserved groups
- Increase the quality of mental health services, including measurable outcomes
- Promote interagency and community collaboration related to mental health services or supports or outcomes
- Increase access to mental health services

A Final Report is due to the MHSOAC within six months after the project ends. The Report should address the extent to which the project met its learning objectives, summarize lessons learned and disseminate learnings to other programs, agencies or counties.

MHSA Innovation funds cannot be expended on a project without prior approval from the MHSOAC. Innovation funds are subject to reversion if not spent within three years of allocation or encumbered under an approved Innovation project.