



**Mental Health Services Act (MHSA)
Thirty Day Public Comment and Review
Request to Expand Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI)
Integrated Primary Care and Mental Health Care**

An overarching goal of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) is to reduce disparities experienced by specific racial/ethnic and cultural groups. The goal of this expansion is to move toward addressing this issue by providing culturally competent and appropriate program strategies, to facilitate access to other PEI programs, and improve individual outcomes of participants in PEI programs. The Children's Health Initiative and the Mental Health Services Act Planning Council have made the request to utilize \$100,000 dollars of unspent PEI funds to provide services for youth ages 6 to 18 that live at the 300% federal poverty level in Merced County. The stakeholders have identified the need for an integrated service experience to address the complex needs of the underserved communities. The proposed expansion can help to link participants to other needed services and assist participants in navigating other systems. The expansion will provide services and increase access and quality of services for children and families living at the 300% federal poverty level. It will improve access to mental health services for underserved communities and reduce disparities in mental health across racial ethnic and socioeconomic groups which are key priorities of MHSA.

In Merced County, approximately 65% of the population is living below 300% of the federal poverty level. There are an alarming number of children who are living in poverty. This places a great emotional burden on the child's emotional well-being and increased stressors on the family. Access to basic preventive services is important for a child's optimal development and readiness for school success. Currently in Merced County, the Department of Public Health is serving families living at the 300% federal poverty level. This expansion would assist with reducing disparities in access to early mental health interventions due to stigma. It would also reduce the lack of knowledge about mental health services or lack of suitability (i.e., cultural competency) of traditional mainstream services. This would assist individuals who do not qualify for other publicly supported programs such as Medi-Cal and Healthy Families who are in need of

behavioral health services. Merced County would like to expand Integrated Primary Care and Mental Health Services within the current PEI Plan to move towards bridging the gap for serving children and their families. This will be achieved through one time Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding. The recipient of this funding, Merced County Public Health, will administer the tracking and the performance outcomes of this program. The expansion will provide capacity building for community health care clinics to provide mental health screenings and early intervention. Community health care clinics will work to implement policies that support best practices for mental health integration. In accordance with Welfare Institution Code WIC) 5848 (a), this update will be posted for 30 days public comment and review. The MHSA Prevention and Early Intervention Expansion of Integrated and Primary Care will be posted on the Mental Health Department website <http://www.co.merced.ca.us/index.aspx?nid=1525>. Residents can request an electronic version of the documents by emailing mhsa@co.merced.ca.us. The public can also request a hard copy of the document by contacting the department at (209) 381-6805 or toll free at 1-866-626-6472. The following staff will be on hand to accept requests:

English speaking residents	Christina Nishihama
Spanish speaking residents	Rosemarie Perez
Hmong speaking residents	Blong Lee

To provide input, recommendations and comments, please call 1-866-626-6472 or email your comments to mhsa@co.merced.ca.us.

For more information regarding Merced County, please visit our website at www.co.merced.ca.us