

Mental Health Services Act—Work Plan Description (EXHIBIT D)



County Name

Merced County

Work Plan Title

Skills Building in Children 0-13

Population to Be Served

Work Plan #2: Expansion funding will enable Caring Kids to increase current focus to include preschools and early childhood education center. The current focus is on infants and toddlers in licensed and license-exempt family child care homes. The specific programs to be added include Second Step and the Middle School Mentoring Program. The Second Step Program is a classroom-based, social skills program for children 4 to 14 years old. The Middle School Mentoring Program will expand a state funded alcohol and drug prevention program for middle school children.

Work Plan Description

The **Skill Building in Children 0-13** is intended to provide, school-based mental health prevention and early intervention. The two pronged strategy of the project is intended to (1) change the culture and understanding of mental health issues within schools and (2) provide PEI programs directly to children within the schools. Changing the culture will help promote the PEI programs by building faculty and administrative supports and a better understanding of how to respond should early intervention be required. The three school-based programs target different age groups with the intention that program coordinators will refer children to the next level program as they “age out” of the various programs. The first program funded for this project will be an intensive education targeting county wide educators. The education component envisions mental health classes that reach into every childcare center and family day care home in the county and teacher trainings that are mandatory for all school staff on the topic of mental health prevalence, the behaviors indicative of mental illness, and what to do about it. Trainings will discuss a broad spectrum of risk factors and talk about childhood depression, anger, violence, eating disorders, and substance use in the context of mental health. It will also help educate teachers on the difference in development and appropriate expectations for children with mental health issues or early onset of mental health illnesses. These trainings will be offered one time and will be intended to help advertise the availability of new prevention and early intervention resources in the county. Information about implementation and availability of new and existing programs will be disseminated to teachers and school staff to aid prevention and early intervention efforts.

The **Caring Kids** expansion will include additional staff so that services can be provided to a greater number of children and families in a wider array of community environments where young children spend time. Caring Kids uses an evidence-based best practices model similar to other well-vetted programs (most notably *Incredible Years*) and has a successful history in Merced County. The Caring Kids project utilizes a “positive behavioral support” model. This model delivers direct services as well as provides teachers, parents, and child care providers with the necessary skills and strategies to: 1) Assess a child’s current and ongoing social behaviors, 2) Teach the child new socially acceptable skills, 3) Ensure that the resources and services necessary for appropriate social and emotional development of the child are available and implemented, and 4) Include parents and child-care providers as partners in the intervention process. Expansion funding will enable Caring Kids to increase their current focus (currently on infants and toddlers in licensed and licensed-exempt family child care homes) to work with preschools and early childhood education centers. The funding will also allow for increased direct service for families in the home. Trainings will include a focus on infant mental health (0-12 months) and on working with parents in different cultural contexts.

Second Step is a classroom-based social-skills program for children 4 to 14 years of age that teaches socio-emotional skills with the intention of reducing impulsive and aggressive behavior while increasing social competence. The program consists of screening, in-school curricula, parent training, and skill development. Second Step teaches children to identify and understand their own and others' emotions, reduce impulsiveness and choose positive goals, and manage their emotional reactions and decision making process when emotionally aroused. The Second Step expansion project will enable more schools to implement the Second Step curriculum on their campuses. Second Step funding will be granted to the Merced County Office of Education with direction to expand the program county-wide based on school commitment, level of need, and risk factors relating to mental health issues. The program will be overseen by a coordinator housed within the Office of Education.

The **Middle School Mentoring Program** will expand a state funded alcohol and drug prevention program for middle school children. The program works towards alcohol and drug prevention through a peer mentoring model, pairing trained high school leaders with at-risk eighth graders. Core curriculum activities include education about the ill effects of alcohol and drugs. This PEI prevention funding will expand the program so that it can be utilized in additional middle schools. Funds will be used to expand the current curriculum to incorporate Let Each One Teach One components to improve attitudes towards school, peer relations, and adults.

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

Annual Number of Clients to Be Served

_____ Total

Number of Clients By Funding Category

_____ Full Service Partnerships

_____ System Development

_____ Outreach & Engagement

PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Annual Number to Be Served:

1,184 individuals and 516 families

Number of Clients By Type of Prevention

5 individuals and 5 families

Early Intervention