



Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) – Innovation (INN) Project Brief

Project: Adult Residential In-home Support Element (ARISE)

Proposed by: Mental Health Association of San Mateo County

Total Amount Requested: \$1,235,000 (\$990K services, \$145K admin, \$100K eval)

Duration of Project: 4 years (3 years of services, 6 mths start-up, 6 mths post eval)

Background

San Mateo County's MHSA Three-Year Plan prioritized strategies to strengthen the housing continuum and provide integrated treatment and recovery supports for individuals living with mental health and substance use challenges. The proposed project was identified as a priority to address the need.

The Challenge

Housing instability can worsen mental health and exacerbate symptoms of mental illness.¹ Studies have shown that many individuals living with serious mental illness (SMI) and/or substance use disorders (SUD) experience cognitive challenges, particularly related to executive functioning skills,² which are critical to managing one's living space.³ Additionally, lethargy is a common physical symptom of depression, medications to treat mental illness may have a side effect of lethargy, and individuals may have active substance use, all of which can impede individuals from performing home maintenance. Mental Health Association of San Mateo County (MHA) serves over 500 clients annually and assists individuals living with SMI and/or SUD to develop and improve daily living skills, including home maintenance. Some individuals have significant deficits in their executive functioning, which can and has resulted in situations where a client is asked to leave or evicted as a result of their inability to maintain their housing in a safe and habitable way.

Many of these clients would benefit from in-home support to maintain their living environment and thereby preserve their housing security. However, the current state system for In-Home Support Services (IHSS) does not adequately support clients whose needs for in-home support are primarily because of their behavioral health condition. MHA clients have applied for and been denied IHSS for not having any identifiable functionally disabling condition, among many other reasons. MHA clients who have been approved for IHSS have challenges in recruiting, hiring, screening, and retaining IHSS workers as they may not have the capacity to do this, be distrustful of having someone come to their home, and/or may have behavioral challenges that affect interpersonal relationships.

The Proposed Project

The proposed project creates a model for residential in-home services specifically designed for clients with SMI and/or SUD who, without additional support, are at risk of losing their housing due to challenges with managing their environment. The project will recruit and train residential in-home support workers, who will work closely with a peer support staff and occupational therapist. The in-home support workers will be

¹ H. Kim, S.A. Burgard, Housing instability and mental health among renters in the Michigan recession and recovery study, Public Health, Volume 209, 2022, Pages 30-35, ISSN 0033-3506, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2022.05.015>.

² Regev S, Josman N., 2020; Jackson, C.T., Fein, D., Essock, S.M. et al., 2001; Christopher R Bowie, Philip D Harvey, 2006

³ Vogan et al., 2018; Wallace et al., 2016; Yon-Hernández, J.A., Wojcik, D.Z., García-García, L. et al. 2022





matched with clients based on needs, culture, language, and personality and paid adequately with at least 15 hours of work per week guaranteed.

Services

Residential in-home support workers will offer clients an average of four hours per week of culturally responsive support focused on the needs of individuals living with complex behavioral health challenges including, but not limited to, home maintenance, cleaning, shopping, cooking, and other critical supports that will allow an individual to continue living as independently as possible. Clients will be able to continue receiving in-home support services indefinitely. Peer staff will provide support to clients on a regular or as-needed basis, and participants will continue to receive case management and occupational therapy through their existing service plans.

Target Population

The project will serve up to 35 adults annually living with SMI and/or SUD who are at risk of losing housing due to challenges with managing their environment and who voluntarily choose to participate. Thus far, MHA has identified 18 clients who live in their own apartments (with subsidies from the County of San Mateo Housing Authority) and are or have been at risk of losing their housing and anticipates that number will increase as MHA does a more thorough assessment of its 500+ clients.

The Innovation

- **MHSA Innovative Project Category:** Makes a change to an existing practice in the field of behavioral health, including but not limited to, application to a different population
- **MHSA Primary Purpose:** Increases access to behavioral health services, including but not limited to, services provided through permanent supportive housing

The proposed project develops an alternative to the existing IHSS system, creating an in-home support model that better suits adults with behavioral health needs. The value of providing in-home supports has been well documented, particularly for individuals with physical challenges, for elderly and frail adults, and for people with memory problems. Many of the in-home support services that the program will provide are similar to what IHSS authorizes, but the program differs in that it will assist clients in recruiting, hiring, and overseeing in-home residential workers; provide specialized training to workers; and promote recruitment and retention by guaranteeing up to 15 hours per week of work and ensuring workers are paid \$30/hour.

Learning Goals

There is significant opportunity to learn from the implementation and outcomes of this project. Lessons learned can inform the design and implementation of in-home supports for adults with behavioral health needs; if successful, the project design could transform the in-home support services model in other jurisdictions, statewide, and even nationally. Through an independent evaluation, this project seeks to learn:

1. Do clients receiving in-home supports tailored for individuals with behavioral health needs **maintain their housing**?
2. To what extent does the ARISE program support clients' **health, wellbeing, and recovery**?
3. To what extent does the ARISE program **improve capacity** for in-home supports to serve individuals with complex behavioral health challenges and how might these outcomes inform changes to the state IHSS program?

