



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

**Cultural and Linguistic Outreach for Veterans**

**Posting Date: June 21, 2011 to July 2011**

An overarching goal of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) is to reduce disparities experienced by specific racial/ethnic and cultural groups. Welfare Institution Code 5848 (a) identifies Veterans as key stakeholders. In Merced County it is estimated that there are 12,500 Veterans. 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 Merced County stakeholders have identified the need for an integrated service experience to address the complex needs of the Veterans in our community. Prevention and Early Intervention approaches in and of themselves are transformational in the way they restructure the mental health system to a “help-first” approach. Prevention programs bring mental health awareness into the lives of all members of the community through public education initiatives and dialogue. To facilitate accessing supports at the earliest possible signs of mental health problems and concerns, PEI builds capacity for providing mental health early intervention services at sites where people go for other routine activities (e.g., health providers, education facilities, community organizations).

Mental health becomes part of wellness for individuals and the community, reducing the potential for stigma and discrimination against individuals with mental illness. The Merced County MHSA Planning Council endorsed guiding principles to govern development of Prevention and Early Intervention projects. Services should be provided in places where people already go such as schools and doctors offices and not at the mental health department which continues to be stigmatized. Merced County Department of Mental health would like to expand Prevention and Early Intervention outreach and engagement to Veterans through a partnership with the Veterans

Services. This Partnership would provide a one-stop resource for access to community mental health services for Veterans and their families. The goal of the partnership would be:

- To foster cross referral and mental health access by strengthening communities in assisting with supportive efforts to support health and well being.
- Increase mental health awareness through culturally competent and linguistically competent materials designed for the un/underserved populations.
- Increase awareness of available mental health services provided by the County and the Community.
- Promote wellness and recovery.

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 Veterans and their families. 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.

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. Merced County would like to expand Cultural and Linguistic Outreach within the current PEI Plan to move towards bridging the gap for serving Veterans and their families. This will be achieved through Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding of \$100,000. The recipient of this funding, Veterans Services (Human Services Agency), will administer the tracking and the performance outcomes of this program. The expansion will provide capacity building for Veterans Services to provide mental health screenings and early intervention. Veterans Services 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 Cultural and Linguistics Outreach to Veterans will be posted on the Mental Health Department website <http://www.co.merced.ca.us/index.aspx?nid=490>. Residents can request an electronic version of the documents by emailing [mhsa@co.merced.ca.us](mailto: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 available 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](mailto:mhsa@co.merced.ca.us).

For more information regarding Merced County, please visit our website at [www.co.merced.ca.us](http://www.co.merced.ca.us)