

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE MHSA COALITION

We are a diverse coalition of state and local organizations representing consumers, family members, providers, parents/caregivers, advocates and other stakeholders committed to preserving the goals and services provided by the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA).

Our organizations include those working alongside county and local decision makers, individuals living with mental illness including those involved with the criminal justice system, and those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Together we are dedicated to elevating the conversation around behavioral health to advance and preserve prevention, disparity reduction, early intervention, treatment and recovery-based services and supports.

Many of our coalition members, both entities and individuals, were instrumental in the passage of the MHSA. From drafting its language to rallying communities in a comprehensive ground-level campaign to gather support, the MHSA was a true grassroots effort driven by and for the

voices of those it was designed to serve. More than 15 years after the passage of the MHSA, there have been numerous conversations about its effectiveness, its purpose and whether it has delivered on its promise to transform California's mental health care system. However, these discussions are taking place at the state level, without the inclusion of consumers and families – the very populations that stand to be the most impacted by any changes.



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We are united in the belief that the core values of the MHSA must be retained. As stated in the MHSA: “with effective treatment and support, including client-centered, family-driven, and community-based services that are culturally and linguistically competent and provided in an integrated services system, recovery from mental illness is feasible. The MHSA, if adequately enforced, provides California with the ability to save lives and save money by committing to the provision of timely, adequate services” (Excerpted from the Mental Health Services Act, Section 2 (e,f)).

Our Unified Guiding Principles

Retain Core MHSA Values and Goals

- The MHSA must continue to be guided by the MHSA General Standards (Community Collaboration; Cultural Competence; Client Driven; Family Driven; Wellness, Recovery, and Resilience Focused and Integrated Service Experience) 9 CCR § 3320.
- Services must continue to be driven by **clients, family members, and those with lived experience**.
- **Unserved, underserved, and hard to reach populations** must remain a focus.
- **Local control** and fund allocation are crucial to ensure programs and services are designed to meet the needs of the unique and diverse populations across the state.
- California must support a public mental health system that **does not require people to deteriorate before receiving services**.
- The MHSA must retain the **voluntary** nature of services that the Act is based upon.
- The **local Community Planning Process** is a foundation of the MHSA and must remain a key foundation of service planning and delivery.
- **Reducing disparities** must remain a priority.

Meaningful Stakeholder Involvement

- **Diverse stakeholders must be meaningfully involved** in discussions and decisions regarding any proposed changes to the Act.
- Local Community Planning Processes must be **transparent, comprehensive and accountable** to stakeholders.

Advance and Preserve MHSA’s Programs

- The MHSA must continue funding **community-based services** that meet people where they are. These services are the foundation of the MHSA and they have proven to be successful.
- People currently receiving services should not lose those services.
- **Peer-run** and peer-delivered services must be preserved.
- **PEI programs and funding must be preserved** because unserved and underserved communities often prefer these programs.

MHSA Funds Are for Mental Health Initiatives

- MHSA funds should not be utilized to solve the homelessness issue in its entirety except for utilizing funds to assist those who are homeless and also live with a mental health condition.
- MHSA **funds should not be diverted** for purposes not consistent with its values, or used to backfill budget gaps that should be funded through other revenue streams.

Accountability, Enforcement, and Outcomes-Driven Decisions

- Collection, analysis and dissemination of **data and outcome measures** are essential to ensure that MHSA funds are spent consistent with the intent of the Act.
- Strong **enforcement and accountability** are critical to the success and effectiveness of the MHSA.