

Comprehensive Evaluation Shows Power of Prevention for California's Mental Health



In 2004, California voters approved Proposition 63, the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), to expand California's mental health services and to use innovative efforts to identify and treat mental health challenges. One of the key tenants of the MHSA is accountability to Californians. The California Mental Health Services Authority's (CalMHSA) programs build evaluation into their design, ensuring continual improvement and value to county members. CalMHSA contracted with the RAND Corporation to design and implement this evaluation of CalMHSA's three prevention and early intervention initiatives.

Clear Need for Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Programs

CalMHSA's partnership with RAND adds to the understanding of the impact of mental health stigma on Californians and demonstrates why stigma and discrimination reduction programs are critical to improving California's mental health. In the first survey of its kind, researchers asked people with who have moderate mental health challenges or who are at risk for them about experiences with stigma and discrimination.

- Nine in 10 reported experiencing discrimination because of their mental health challenge in the previous year.
- Those feelings of isolation and misunderstanding were most prevalent among the relationships we usually consider the closest: family and romantic partners.
- The survey also revealed that 20% of people might avoid getting help out of fear of letting others know about their mental health challenges.

[Stigma, Discrimination, and Well-Being Among California Adults Experiencing Mental Health Challenges](#)

The researchers concluded that "there is a clear need for stigma and discrimination reduction efforts in the state of California."

CalMHSA Programs are Tackling Stigma

Stigma, or the misplaced fear and judgement around mental health challenges, was identified by the U.S. Surgeon General as "the most formidable obstacle" to improving mental health. RAND's survey of Californians with moderate mental health challenges shows counties' collaborative efforts through CalMHSA are making a difference.

35% of those with moderate mental health challenges have been reached by CalMHSA activities, and CalMHSA strategies have the potential to reach 95%.

[Changes in Mental Illness Stigma in California During the Statewide Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Initiative](#)

Each Mind Matters "sticks"

RAND's two-year follow-up survey showed 25% of Californians recognize the slogan of Each Mind Matters: California's Mental Health Movement, a sign Californians are replacing fear and isolation with knowledge, hope, and acceptance.

Innovative Efforts Result in Attitude Changes

Middle school students who attended "Walk in Our Shoes" presentations expressed less stigmatizing attitudes and greater willingness to interact with students with a mental health problem, and more positive emotional responses to a student with a mental health problem.

[Findings from the School-Based Theatrical Performance Walk in Our Shoes](#)



More Inclusion
 Nearly 1.5 million more Californians (a 5% increase year-over-year) are **willing to socialize with, live next door to or work with people who have mental health challenges.**



More Support
 Approximately 600,000 additional Californians (a 2% increase year-over-year) **provided emotional support to someone with a mental health challenge.**

Trainings Equip Education Systems to Meet Student Mental Health Needs

Trainings reached large numbers of educators, students and staff in the State's K-12 and higher education systems, including women and individuals from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds. Training participants reported greater confidence to intervene with students in distress, greater confidence to refer students to mental health resources, and greater likelihood to intervene or refer students in distress.

[Mental Health Trainings in California's Higher Education System Are Associated with Increased Confidence and Likelihood to Intervene](#)

According to reporting to CalMHSA, in less than three years, over 250,000 Californians have been trained in Prevention and Early Intervention strategies in our higher education systems.

Suicide Prevention Programs Save Lives and Dollars

Know the Signs suicide prevention campaign empowers Californians to intervene and support those at risk for suicide

Know the Signs is CalMHSA's statewide suicide prevention social marketing campaign. Through *Know the Signs*, Californians have learned to recognize the warning signs of suicide, how to find the words to have a direct conversation with someone in crisis, and where to find professional help and resources.

The RAND Corporation called the *Know the Signs* social marketing campaign "one of the best media campaigns on the subject" of suicide prevention.

Those who viewed *Know the Signs* materials were more confident intervening with those at risk of suicide, more comfortable discussing suicide, more aware of the warning signs, and felt they had greater skills and knowledge on intervening with or referring someone at risk to help.

[Adults Exposed to Know the Signs Are More Confident Intervening with Those At Risk for Suicide](#)

Suicide Prevention Training builds California's life saving capacity

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) teaches how to recognize risk factors, intervene and refer people to appropriate resources. The RAND Corporation found that ASIST has a positive financial benefit for California through fewer suicide attempts and deaths, reduced spending on emergency care and recovery, and increased earnings.



The state government will **gain \$50 for each dollar invested** in ASIST through averted Medi-Cal health care costs and increased state income tax revenue.



One year invested in CalMHSA's ASIST program is projected to prevent at least 140 deaths and 3,600 suicide attempts over the next three decades.

79 ASIST trainers trained annually

11,895 people will be taught suicide intervention techniques

[Analysis of the Benefits and Costs of CalMHSA's Investment in Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training \(ASIST\)](#)

The reports cited in this newsletter and additional information from RAND's evaluation of CalMHSA's programs are available online at: www.calmhsa.org/programs/evaluation/