



**Butte County Department of Behavioral Health
Mental Health Services Act – Prevention Early Intervention
African American Cultural Center**

MHSA

In November 2004, California voters passed Proposition 63, which on January 1, 2005 became state law entitled the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). The purpose MHSA is to provide increased funding to support mental health in California, particularly for individuals from unserved or underserved communities.

The ultimate goal of California's MHSA is to create a culturally competent mental health care system that addresses prevention of mental illness, provides early intervention services for those in need, uses state of the art treatment to promote recovery and wellness for persons with mental illness, and eliminates disparities in mental health care across socioeconomic and racial/ethnic groups (from UC Davis Center for Reducing Health Disparities).

MHSA consists of six unique components: Community Services and Supports (CS&S), Prevention, Early Intervention (PEI), Workforce Education & Training (WET), Capital Facilities and Information Technology (CAP/IT), Housing, and Innovation ((INN). Each component includes a community driven planning process. One of the proposals in Butte County's Prevention Early Intervention (PEI) draft plan is an African American Cultural Center in Southside, Oroville.

'I Aspire to Inspire'

During the planning process, the African American focus groups concluded that a center, in the Southside area of Oroville would be the place where issues of families and young people can be discovered, addressed, and where the health and vitality of the African American community can be restored. People's stories spoke of the reasons a restorative safe place was needed:

- Young adults who don't know how to help their parents with mental illness
- Being unable to access county mental health services because people were not "sick enough" (did not meet "medical necessity")
- Young men who return from prison to no jobs, discrimination, and a decline into depression, lowering self-esteem, and giving up
- "Healthy" African Americans don't stay in the community to mentor youth
- A feeling of stress with no one to talk to who has been through the same thing, as an African American
- Feeling invisible in a world dominated by white people
- Cultural trauma

- African American youth with a very high rate of incarceration and of involvement in violence

The vision for the African American Cultural Center is to be “a beacon; an island utopia.” Community members spoke with enthusiasm about their own leadership in the center, saying, “I aspire to inspire”.

African American Cultural Center

The PEI Draft Plan describes the center in the following manner:

The African-American Resource Center will primarily serve as a place where the community can gather to express itself through cultural events. Simultaneously, the center will be the place where people are able to learn about and connect with services and agencies such as Butte County Department of Behavioral Health. BCDBH staff will be located in the center to provide on-site services at times convenient to community members. Behavioral Health services will include suicide prevention and mental health awareness activities. The center will serve as a kind of bridge in the community between the people and the providers, emphasizing a strong cultural component.

A group of trained community members will be part of the center’s staff. They will act as liaisons with the community members, by way of outreach, organizing events, talking to community leaders, assessing needs and identifying agencies. All with the goal of increasing prevention/early intervention experiences that benefit the community.

Community Development Process

In order to develop an African American Cultural Center that meets the needs of African Americans in Southside Oroville and meets the definition of MHSA Prevention Early Intervention services, a community development process is included in the plan. The goal of the community development process is to develop clear structure and details regarding the implementation and ongoing operation of the African American Cultural Center in Southside Oroville.