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## Promising Older Adult Mental Health Programs

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This fact sheet and the accompanying compendium provide information about 25 promising older adult mental health programs that were identified through the California Mental Health Older Adult System of Care Project. The two-year study assessed older adult mental health care service delivery in six counties through key informant interviews with administrators, county-contracted providers, and consumers of county mental health services. Specifically, stakeholders were interviewed about their views on facilitators for implementing an integrated and comprehensive system of mental health care for older adults and also on strategies for overcoming barriers to implementation. Through this process, the interviewees described mental health programs and services that they believed were beneficial for older adults based on firsthand experience. These older adult mental health programs are deemed promising in that, per the dictionary definition of that word, they “are likely to succeed or to yield good results” and also may be of interest to other counties across the state.

Promising programs incorporate the values of the Mental Health Services Act (2004), which include a strength-based approach, consumer/family focus, a continuum of services, and outcome accountability. They are based on evidence that older adults are best served through age-appropriate programs that consider their specific needs.<sup>1</sup>

Those 60 years of age and older are more likely than those in other age groups to have limited mobility and to be socially isolated, both of which can make it difficult to access care.<sup>2,3</sup> The perceived stigma associated with seeking mental health services is a more significant barrier for older adults compared to other age cohorts,<sup>3,4</sup> and treatment of mental illness among older adults may require specialized care due to increased comorbidities.<sup>5</sup> Overcoming these challenges to provide effective mental health care demands integrated and collaborative approaches across services, with skilled providers trained in eldercare.

Research has shown that programs that involve peer support, use integrative or collaborative models, incorporate medication management, and have providers that specialize in older adult care achieve better mental health outcomes.<sup>3,5,6</sup> In California, county mental health service providers, consumers, and administrators identified promising programs that include these and other targeted strategies. Funds are allocated to these programs through the state’s county mental health and behavioral health departments; the programs are operated by county behavioral/mental health agencies and by contracted organizations, agencies, and clinics.

Exhibit 1

Promising Older Adult Mental Health Program Service Settings and Strategies

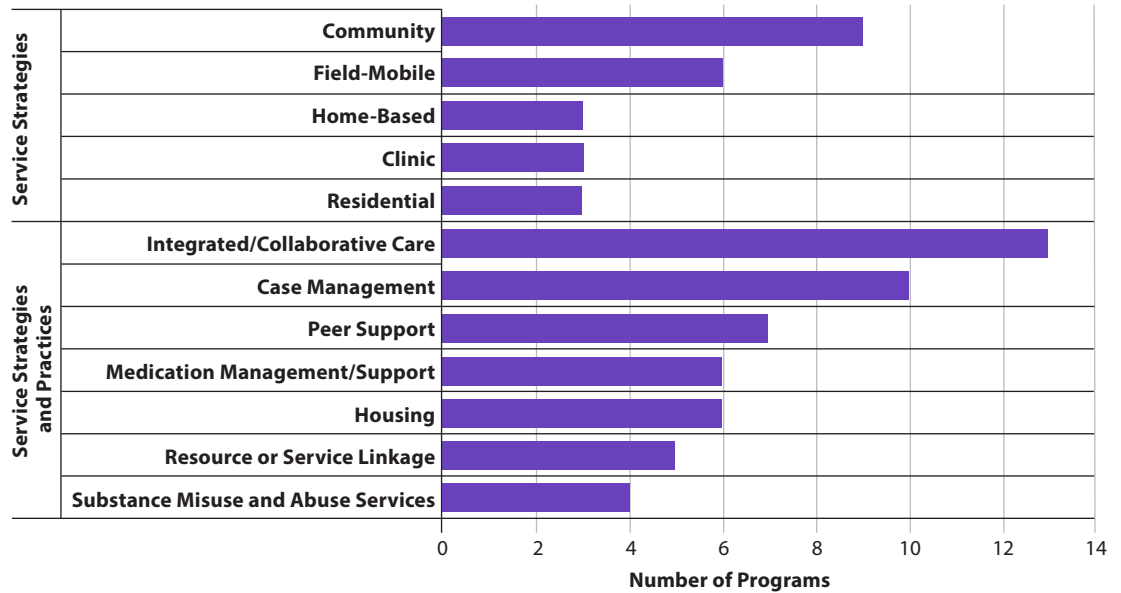


Exhibit 1 presents the care settings and service strategies used by the programs listed in the compendium (<http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/publications/Documents/PDF/2018/PromisingPrograms-compendium-jan2018.pdf>). Two of the twenty-five programs are specific to workforce development and are oriented for service providers in the field of older adult mental health care. These programs do not have a “service setting” or “service strategy” and are therefore not represented in Exhibit 1. The remaining 23 are programs targeted for or inclusive of older adult consumers either diagnosed with serious mental illness or at risk for developing mental illness. The majority of these 23 programs are provided in the community setting and use an integrated or collaborative care model that involves either coordinating care between service providers or providing multidisciplinary services within one team or setting. All programs use strategies that reflect at least two of the four recommended Older Adult System of Care<sup>7</sup> service types: prevention, access to care, recovery, and integration/collaboration.

It is important to note that the *Compendium of Promising Older Adult Mental Health Programs* is not an exhaustive list of all older adult programs in the six study counties.<sup>†</sup> Programs described in the compendium were identified by participants in the study and reflect the experiences of those who administer, provide, or participate in the programs on a regular basis.

The mental health needs of older Californians are an important statewide priority, and programs that are successful should be recognized and information about them shared widely. The older adult population in the state is expected to grow to 13.9 million by 2050, representing an increase of 128 percent from 2010.<sup>8</sup> The California Board of Behavioral Sciences asserts that paying attention to older adults’ mental health is critical,

<sup>†</sup> Additional sources that describe mental health programs in counties can be found through MHSAs Annual Updates for Counties as well as the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) in California, which publishes reports on mental health programs provided in all California counties.

**Exhibit 2**

**Promising Older Adult Mental Health Care Programs in the Six Study Counties**

<b>Alameda County</b>	<b>San Diego County</b>
Geriatric Assessment and Response Team (GART)	Uptown Safe Haven Transitional Housing
Senior Advocates for Hope and Justice	Senior Impact
Homeless Senior Services	Behavioral Health Education and Training Academy (BHETA): Geriatric Certificate Programs
Pool of Consumer Champions	Project One for All for Homeless
Afghan Elderly Association Programs	Positive Solutions
<b>Los Angeles County</b>	Telecare AgeWise
Geriatric Evaluation Networks Encompassing Services Intervention Support Program (GENESIS)	REACH CALMA
Jail Transition and Linkage Services	CREST
Seeking Safety (SS)	<b>Siskiyou County</b>
Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives for Seniors (PEARLS)	Six Stones Wellness
UCLA Geriatric Psychiatry Fellowship	<b>Tulare County</b>
<b>Monterey County</b>	Check In with You: Older Adult Hopelessness Screening Program
Drake House	Visalia Adult Integrated Clinic
Senior Peer Counseling	Transitional Living Center (TLC)
Bienestar	

because hundreds of thousands age 65 and over are in need of mental health services.<sup>9</sup> This includes both those aging with serious mental illness and those encountering high levels of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse beginning in late life. Mental and behavioral health care departments can use this compendium as a menu of potential options to implement as a way of enhancing services for older adults. Consumers can also use the compendium to determine whether local mental health programs share features of the successful approaches listed here.

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### Endnotes

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#### MHSA Evaluation:

This policy brief is part of a six-county study of public mental health services for older adults funded by the MHSA. For more information on this evaluation, and to see all related publications, please visit: <http://www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu/Older-Adult-Mental-Health>



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