



January 24, 2023

Toby Ewing, Ph.D., Executive Director  
Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission  
1812 9th Street  
Sacramento, CA 95811

**Re: *Well and Thriving: Prevention and Early Intervention in California***

Dear MHSOAC Commissioners:

On behalf of the California Alliance of Child and Family Services, which represents 160 community-based organizations that provide crucial services to children and families, and the Children's Partnership, a children's health advocacy organization dedicated to the well-being of children and their families, we respectfully submit the following comments regarding the ***Well and Thriving: Prevention and Early Intervention in California*** report. We greatly appreciate the Prevention and Early Intervention Subcommittee's work to establish a strategic statewide approach to prevention and early intervention and we thank you for the specific actions outlined in the Implementation Plan. As the Subcommittee moves forward with finalizing the report, we ask you to consider the following comments and recommendations.

**Recommendation One**

**MHSOAC should identify itself as the leader of a cohesive and comprehensive plan on prevention for all Californians that cuts across funding streams and departments.** We appreciate the Subcommittee's first recommendation and agree that the state must develop a strategic approach that integrates existing initiatives to address the root causes of mental health disparities for marginalized communities in California. We support the call for a statewide leader to be charged with facilitating this work and believe MHSOAC is uniquely positioned to serve as that leader.

There are currently numerous efforts to provide prevention and early intervention services and supports to Californians. As stated in Recommendation 1.b., the first step in implementing a cohesive plan will be to "Assess existing prevention and early intervention investments to identify opportunities for improved integration." **The priority should be synthesizing and aligning the various existing efforts, rather than developing an entirely new plan.**

We strongly support the inclusion of those with lived experience in the advisory body tasked with creating a statewide plan, and we thank the Subcommittee for recognizing equity, diversity, and inclusion as the foundation for the statewide strategic plan for prevention and early intervention.

**The report must prioritize outreach and engagement with *all* transition age youth under the identified priorities in Senate Bill 1004.** Focusing solely on youth in college disadvantages transition age youth without access to higher education, which will disproportionately impact transition age youth of color. We agree with our colleagues who have highlighted the importance of outreach and engagement strategies that reach both youth in college **and** youth who are not associated with an educational institution.

**Recommendation Three**



**Identify areas where the Commission can leverage and align various state efforts to establish a public mental health awareness campaign.** This includes creating alignment among ongoing efforts through the CYBHI, Office of the Surgeon General/ACES Aware, and First 5 California. The report could be strengthened by recommending a single cohesive public awareness strategy or campaign, led by the State, to influence the broader narrative about mental health and influence state leaders' responses to the existing crisis. Again, the Commission can be most impactful by working to align various existing efforts and enhance cohesion among the partners working on these initiatives.

**Recommendation Four**

**Focus efforts on strengthening community-level interventions, scaling community-defined evidence-based practices (CDEPs), and enhancing existing social support and services.** We applaud the Subcommittee for the inclusion of the *Opportunity Spotlight: Community-Defined Evidence Practices in the Well and Thriving* report and strongly support recommendation 4.C. An explicit action item in the Implementation Plan about the provision and scaling of community-defined evidence practices (CDEPs) can ensure this recommendation comes to fruition.

The PEI report presents an opportunity to identify where the Commission can and should be leading to drive additional state and local investments in time and resources toward true upstream prevention and early intervention where it can be most impactful - in the lives of children, youth, and their families, particularly low-income households and families of color. We urge the Commission to leverage its unique position to convene and influence other state and local policymakers to lead implementation of this report. Our agencies are eager to serve as partners in this work.

We look forward to continued collaboration with the Commission and appreciate the opportunity to provide this feedback.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adrienne Shilton".

Adrienne Shilton  
Director of Public Policy and Strategy  
California Alliance of Child and Family Services

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angela M. Vázquez".

Angela M. Vázquez  
Policy Director  
The Children's Partnership