



**Mental Health Services Act Innovations**  
**Mixteco/Indígena Project Healing the Soul – Curando el Alma – Na Sáanna é Inié**  
**Project Report – July 30, 2020**  
**Project Brief**



**Alignment to the Innovation Intention and MHSA Principles**

The MICOP Healing the Soul Research Project provided mental health care services to 280 Mixteco or Indigenous community members in a comprehensive culturally appropriate Oxnard-based countywide implementation process. We continue to report ways in which the project is aligned with innovative MHSA aspirational goals for outreach, prevention, early intervention, improved access to services, support services, family involvement, and treatment for un-served and underserved communities.

According to MHSA, “Innovation projects are novel, creative and/or ingenious mental health practices or approaches that contribute to learning.” These projects are “defined, as contributing to learning rather than a primary focus on providing a service. By providing the opportunity to ‘try out’ new approaches that can inform current and future mental health practices or approaches in communities.” While “merely addressing an unmet need is not sufficient to receive INN funding,” this Quarter’s Healing the Soul research findings continue to provide evidence of a reawakening of the heart of traditional healing learned from seasoned community healers within Indigenous Mexican migrant communities against the 21st century high incidence mental health contexts. The service provision is a byproduct of the learning while the ‘trying out’ of the practice to inform another group of practitioners: VCBH partners which will be realized in the coming year. To date, data driven findings suggest the practices identified are preventative and may lead to increasingly culturally competent “change to an existing practice in the field of mental health.” Finally, we are confident in our assertion that the practices cultivated in this project constitute a “community driven approach that has been successful in a non-mental health context” and look forward as indicated in the Work Plan in the Appendix attached to transfer or duplicate some of the methodologies in the existing mental health care system. The work is innovative, indeed.

Because MHSA/ VCBH are in the process of creating a 3-year plan, it is important at this time to note the current project's adherence and alignment to the five principles framing the MHSA ethos: cultural competence, community collaboration, client/ consumer/ family involvement, integrated service delivery, and wellness/ recovery.

Healing the Soul is unique in that it provides measureable outcomes for these principles in ways that can assist the State and County to improve Mixteco/ Indígena and Latinx mental health inequities. For example, there is evidence of **cultural competence** and appropriate language use in the development and implementation of every data collection point employed from focus group conversations that informed survey questions, to the ways in which the team was trained by local healers to implement Indigenous modalities, to the collection of pre, post, and MHSA/ VCBH demographic metrics. Access to culturally congruent services was free and there was no lengthy intake process. **Community collaboration** was essential as the Team engaged learning from the community as the source of 'holders of education, knowledge, and resources' for healing and the provision of mental healthcare within the Mixteco/ Indígena 'ways of knowing.' From outreach, to data collection, to implementation and ongoing outcome measurement **clients (community members) and their families have been directly involved.** The community, including an Advisory Board, assisted in the identification of best practices for mental health care services and referred those members of the community who needed services. Some now serve as volunteers in the final implementation phase and will go on to work with the team in the education and dissemination stages with VCBH practitioners. As we move toward sharing findings and aspects of the findings with VCBH team members, we are confident an **integrated service delivery model** wherein culturally recognizable and appropriate services will be made available to the Mixteco/ Indígena community. Finally, the intake process in which clients self-identify needs by describing their symptoms leads community members towards individualized **wellness and recovery** plans. Clients are reminded of the culturally recognizable practices from Oaxaca that are echoed in the implementation phase of this project, which are easily integrated into their lives, making them more fulfilling and productive, whether they suffer from mental health symptoms or not.



## Final Implementation Research Findings Brief

-An almost unprecedented 99% of the 280 Mixteco/Indígena community members who received treatment report overwhelmingly favorable results from the treatments prescribed.

-Pre-and Post-test results for the category of **stress** indicate a 20% reduction in nearly every symptom associated with stress. The largest reductions include 35% reduction in physical aches and pains, 29% reduction in becoming emotionally agitated, and 26% reduction of physical low energy. The smallest variation was in the use of drugs and alcohol with a 5% increase, interpreted as participant misreporting of the increased use of medicinal teas as opposed to actual increase of drug and alcohol use between the Pre-and Post-tests.

- Pre-and Post-test results for the category of **anxiety** indicate a 15% reduction in most every symptom associated with anxiety. The largest reductions include 25% reduction in psychological excessive worry, 22% reduction in emotional hyper-vigilance and irritability, and 21% reductions in cognitive lack of concentration and emotional uneasiness among community members. Variations were less in the areas of restlessness and excessive sweating, at reductions of 1% and 4% respectively. These may be interpreted as the physical cleansing aspects of the medicinal plants in teas and the actual heat experienced in the vapor baths as logical influences in responses between the Pre-and Post-tests.

- Pre-and Post-test results for the category of **depression** indicate a 12% overall reduction in symptoms associated with depression. The greatest reductions include a 28% reduction in psychological mood swings, a 22% reduction in emotional and psychological feelings of overwhelming sadness, and a 20% reduction of emotional psychological feelings of hopelessness. The smallest variations were positive with regard to depression. These included participants not feeling as if they don't care, which conversely means the participants cared more following the intervention (-12%). As well there was a -2% reduction in thoughts related to feelings of self-harm.

-70% of participants were Mixteco/ Indígena. 30% of the participants report they are of Mexican Indigenous descent and when the Pueblo is unknown they state the region their family is from.

-Of note, the *Curanderas* who trained the research team on the healing modalities and Advisory members who have guided the research study have been participants in the healing aspect of the study and not only report favorable results, but fidelity in the use of herbal remedies as well as the healing modalities practiced as being culturally accurate and this appropriate.