**Category 2 Project Narrative – Pass 2**

**Hill Country MHDD – 133340307.2.5**

**Project Area, Option and Title:** 2.13.1 Provide an intervention for a targeted behavioral health population to prevent unnecessary use of services in a specific setting: Veteran Mental Health and Support Services

**RHP Project Identification Number:** 133340307.2.5

**Performing Provider Name:** Hill Country Community MHMR Center (dba Hill Country MHDD Centers)

**Performing Provider TPI #:** 133340307

**Project Summary:**

* **Provider Description:** Hill Country Community MHMR Center (Hill Country) is a community mental health center providing mental health, substance use disorder, early childhood intervention and intellectual and developmental disability services to the following counties of RHP8: Blanco and Llano. Hill Country serves a 2,607 square mile area of RHP8 with a population of approximately 30,582 in 2012.
* **Intervention:** This project will implement Veteran Mental Health Services within the 2 counties served by Hill Country in RHP 8 to meet the overall health needs of veterans dealing with behavioral health issues. The project will expand peer support services in an effort to identify veterans and their family members who need comprehensive community based wrap around behavioral health services, such as psychiatric rehabilitation, skills training, crisis intervention, supported housing and supported employment, that would complement, but not duplicate, potential services through the Veterans Administration and provide the community based wrap around behavioral health services for these veterans and their family members to treat symptoms prior to the need for utilization of emergency departments, inpatient hospitalization or incarceration.
* **Project Status:** The project will expand Veteran Peer Support and implement community based wrap around behavioral health services for Veterans and their families within Blanco and Llano counties.
* **Project Need:** Hill Country’s service area within RHP 8 has a veteran population of 4,251 and veterans seeking behavioral health services currently have to travel and take a full day off of work to receive behavioral health services (CN.2.21). Based on an average family size for Blanco and Llano counties of 2.25, the veterans and their families are a total target population base for the project of 9,564. In addition, a recent study of death certificates in Texas revealed that the percentage of deaths by suicide for Texas veterans was nearly double the same rate for civilians.
* **Target Population:** The target population is veterans within Blanco and Llano counties who have behavioral health issues. The target population consists of the 9,564 veterans and their families in Blanco and Llano counties, including reservists who only receive Veteran Administration benefits for 180 days after federal deployment. Based on the population served in Hill Country’s behavioral health program in RHP 8, it is estimated that approximately 27% of our behavioral health patients within RHP 8 have Medicaid and approximately 81% have income below $15,000 per year.
* **Category 1 or 2 Expected Project Benefit for Patients:** The project seeks to provide services to a minimum of 60 veterans and/or their family members from the 2 counties served by Hill Country in RHP 8 by the end of DY5 and 20% of the veterans served show improved functional status (I‐5.1) based on the Adult Needs and Strengths Assessment (ANSA). The cumulative anticipated number of veterans or their family members served by demonstration year is as follows: DY3 12; DY4 30; DY5 60. The anticipated number of individuals served is shown as an unduplicated number since services will carry over between demonstration years. The anticipated number of veterans or their family members beginning the program in each demonstration year is as follows: DY3 12; DY4 18; DY5 30.
* **Category 3 Outcomes:** IT-11.25. The following Category 3 measures have been proposed in 2014 to describe improvements to the patient population. IT-11.25 Daily Living Activities (DLA-20) In DY4 and DY5 we will report the sum of the average DLA score of all DLA-20 questionnaires completed during the measurement period for a denominator subset of all completed DLAs at Hill Country MHDD Centers for individuals receiving Veteran services divided by the total number of DLA-20 questionnaires completed during the measurement period for the same population. CMHC.5 Adherence to Antipsychotic Medications: In DY4 and DY5 will report adherence to antipsychotic medications in accordance with measure guidelines.
* **Collaboration:** There was not a TAMHSC allocation in Pass 2 and, therefore, was not used for a Pass 2 project.

**Project** **Description:**

*Veteran Mental Health Services*

Studies conducted by the Veterans Administration state that nearly 20% of the suicides that occur in the U.S. are committed by veterans. According to a study of death certificates completed by the Austin American Statesman, the percentage of deaths of Texas veterans caused by suicide from 2003 through 2011 was 21.5% compared to 12.4% for the overall Texas population. Of Texas veterans with a primary diagnosis of post‐traumatic stress disorder who died during this period, 80% died of overdose, suicide or a single‐vehicle crash. According to population estimates from the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Population Data System for Texas Population Estimates Program and statistics from the Veteran’s Administration 9/30/08 Projection of veteran’s by 110th Congressional District, Vet Pop 2007, Llano and Blanco Counties within Hill Country’s service area has a total population of 28,807 with a veteran population of 4,251 and estimated veteran family population of 9,564, or 33.20% of the total population. During discussions with County Veteran Service Officers, it was noted that there is a need for Mental Health services for veterans due to the transportation and time commitment needed to access Veteran Administration services as well as the reluctance of veterans to acknowledge a potential mental health issue with the Veterans Administration.

Hill Country currently has two Veteran Peer Coordinators who recruit volunteer veterans to provide peer support services throughout Hill Country’s 19 county, 22,000 square mile service area. Through this project, Hill Country will acquire an additional Veteran Peer Coordinator who can actively work to recruit and train veteran peer support providers in a concentrated area such as Blanco and Llano Counties. The Veteran Coordinator acquired through this project will be committed to serving Blanco and Llano Counties and will create liaisons within the counties, seek out veterans and establish drop‐in centers, recruit volunteers, connect veterans with other community resources, create jail outreach and jail diversion for veterans involved with the criminal justice system, coordinate medical and behavioral health referrals as appropriate and serve as a liaison with the local National Guard and Reserve units. This project will also include provision of comprehensive community based wrap around behavioral health services, such as psychiatric rehabilitation, skills training, crisis intervention, supported housing and supported employment, that would complement, but not duplicate, potential services through the Veterans Administration for both Veterans and their families in Blanco and Llano counties, including reservists who only receive Veteran Administration benefits for a few months after active deployment. Wrap around services will be delivered by clinicians who have been trained in cultural competency for the military environment. Wraparound services provided through this project in the local community will complement the Psychiatrist and Counselor services provided by the Veteran Administration at the VA clinics. During the last 6 months, the Veteran Peer Support services have referred 60 individuals for mental health treatment.

Hill Country will expand Veteran Peer Services and Veteran Mental Health services throughout the two county area served by Hill Country in RHP 8. In establishing the project, Hill Country will review literature and experiences regarding Veteran Peer and Mental Health services to establish appropriate training for staff on the most effective interventions for veteran services. Upon identifying needed training, Hill Country will recruit appropriate staff and provide targeted training for veteran peer and community based wrap around behavioral health services. As a means to determine the success of the interventions, a functional assessment (DLA‐20) will identify what impact the various stressors have on the individual’s daily life. The DLA‐20 will be completed when a veteran is referred for mental health services and at determined intervals during treatment. In order to track individuals receiving treatment in the program, Hill Country will establish specific units and subunits within its information technology system (Anasazi) that will enable reporting on Veteran Peer and Mental Health services delivered within the program, as well as by location within the program.

**Goals and Relationship to Regional Goals:**

**Project Goal:**

The goal of this project is to establish Veteran Peer and Mental Health services throughout Llano and Blanco counties in order to reduce emergency department utilization, inpatient utilization, and incarceration by developing wrap around services within the community for the targeted population.

**This Project meets the following Regional Goals:**

The goal of this project is to establish Veteran Peer and Mental Health services based on each individual’s needs within the community setting. By providing these services in the community, Hill Country will be meeting the regional goals of:

* Increasing coordination of prevention and care for residents, including those with behavioral and mental health needs; and
* Reducing inappropriate utilization of services.

**Challenges:**

The primary challenge for implementation of the project is recruiting licensed staff. Hill

Country will address the challenge by offering incentives as necessary.

**5‐Year Expected Outcome for Provider and Patients:**

By the end of five years, Hill Country will have established concentrated Veteran Peer and Mental Health services within Llano and Blanco Counties which will have provided services to a minimum of 60 consumers within the community over the life of the project.

**Starting Point/Baseline:**

Hill Country currently has two Veteran Peer Coordinators serving a 19 county, 22,000 square mile service area. This project will expand the number of Veteran Peer Coordinators and provide a dedicated Veteran Peer Coordinator to serve Blanco and Llano Counties served by Hill Country in RHP 8 in order to recruit and train veteran peer service providers. In addition, Hill Country will increase behavioral health services in Blanco and Llano counties to meet the behavioral health needs of the veterans needing more than peer services and for their family members. The DLA‐20 assessment will be performed on each individual entering the program as their baseline and the percentage of individuals who have improved DLA‐20 scores on a subsequent assessment after treatment will be utilized to show improvement.

**Rationale:**

**Community Need Addressed:**

* Community Need Area: CN.2 – Limited access to mental health/behavioral health services
* Specific Community Need: CN.2.21 – Limited access to behavioral health services for veterans in Blanco and Llano counties

Hill Country will identify and train Veteran Peer Coordinators in the provision of veteran peer support services including identifying and seeking out veterans needing services, recruit veteran peer support providers, creating drop‐in centers for veterans, identify and connecting with current resources, and incorporating jail diversion as appropriate for veterans in touch with the criminal justice system.

**Project Components:**

Through the Veteran Mental Health services project, Hill Country proposes to meet all required project components:

1. *Assess size, characteristics and needs of target population*. Hill Country will collect and analyze information on veterans with mental health issues and review contributing factors to episodes to determine appropriate staffing and skill sets necessary for service provision and identify locations.
2. *Review literature / experience with populations similar to target population to determine community‐based interventions that are effective in averting negative outcomes such as repeated or extended inpatient psychiatric hospitalization, decreased mental and physical functional status, nursing facility admission, forensic encounters and in promoting correspondingly positive health and social outcomes / quality of life.* Based on the size, characteristics and needs for the target population, Hill Country will review appropriate literature and experiences regarding serving veteran mental health issues to provide targeted training for staff.
3. *Develop project evaluation plan using qualitative and quantitative metrics to determine outcomes*. Hill Country will develop a project evaluation plan that will review items such as the number of individuals served, the services received, the number of individuals receiving follow up services, the number of individuals with recurring issues, and progression on the Activities of Daily Living assessment (DLA‐20).
4. *Design models which include an appropriate range of community‐based services and residential supports.* Based on the size, characteristics and needs for the target population, Hill Country will train staff in the most appropriate interventions to address the needs of the individuals and connecting the individuals with other appropriate resources within the community.
5. *Assess the impact of interventions based on standardized quantitative measures and qualitative analysis relevant to the target population based on information from the Adult Needs and Strength Assessment and/or participant surveys, and identify opportunities to scale all or part of the intervention(s) to a broader patient population and identify key challenges associated with expansion of the intervention(s), including special considerations for safety‐net populations.* Hill Country will utilize the Activities of Daily Living assessment (DLA‐20) to determine progression of veterans referred for Veteran Mental Health services. In addition, Hill Country will do follow up surveys with individuals who receive Veteran Peer Services to determine satisfaction with services and to help ensure stabilization of symptoms.

**Continuous Quality Improvement:**

Hill Country is committed to continuous quality improvement and learning related to this project. We will establish quality improvement activities such as rapid cycle improvement and will perform other activities such as “lessons learned” and identifying project impacts. In addition, we are participating in a regional learning collaborative which share information such as challenges, lessons learned and considerations for safety net populations.

**How the project represents a new initiative or significantly enhances an existing delivery system reform initiative:** Hill Country currently has two Veteran Peer Coordinators serving a 19 county, 22,000 square mile service area. This project will expand the number of Veteran Peer Coordinators and provide a dedicated Veteran Peer Coordinator to serve Blanco and Llano Counties served by Hill Country in RHP 8 in order to recruit and train veteran peer service providers. In addition, Hill Country will increase behavioral health services in Blanco and Llano counties to meet the therapy and psychiatric needs of the veterans needing more than peer services. Hill Country receives funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; however, none of the funds will be used for this project.

**Related Category 3 Outcome Measure(s):**

The following Category 3 measures have been proposed in 2014 to describe improvements to the patient population. IT-11.25 Daily Living Activities (DLA-20) In DY4 and DY5 we will report the sum of the average DLA score of all DLA-20 questionnaires completed during the measurement period for a denominator subset of all completed DLAs at Hill Country MHDD Centers for individuals receiving Veteran services divided by the total number of DLA-20 questionnaires completed during the measurement period for the same population. CMHC.5 Adherence to Antipsychotic Medications: In DY4 and DY5 will report adherence to antipsychotic medications in accordance with measure guidelines.

Reasons/rationale for selecting the outcome measure: Behavioral health issues impact veterans’ mental health and thus their quality of life. It impacts the individual’s self‐care as well as their ability to cope with their environment. When an individual is unable to properly care for themselves or to cope with their local environment, they are at greater risk of unemployment and poor health. The Activities of Daily Living will be utilized to provide an overview of functional status, determine activity limitations, establish a baseline for treatment, provide a guide for intervention planning, evaluate interventions and monitor progress and to plan for future and for discharge. The Activities of Daily Living will be measured utilizing the DLA‐20 Functional Assessment.

The DLA‐20 Functional Assessment is a functional assessment, proven to be reliable and valid, designed to assess what daily living areas are impacted by mental illness or disability. The assessment tool identifies where outcomes are needed so clinicians can address those functional deficits on individualized service plans. THE DLA‐20 is intended to be used by all disabilities and ages. Developmental Disabilities and Alcohol/Drug Abuse forms are personalized for daily functional strengths and problems associated with those diagnoses.

THE DLA‐20 utilizes the following 20 domains: Health Practices, Housing Stability and Maintenance, Communication, Safety, Managing Time, Nutrition, Problem Solving, Family Relationships, Alcohol/Drug Use, Leisure, Community Resources, Social Network, Sexuality, Productivity, Coping Skills, Behavior Norms, Personal Care/Hygiene, Grooming, and Dress.

**Relationship to Other Projects:**

Provision of Veteran Mental Health services as an alternative to inpatient and emergency department services reinforces objectives for all other behavioral health services provided by Hill Country through RHP 8 (#133340307.2.1 Co‐occurring Psychiatric and Substance Use Disorder, #133340307.2.2 Trauma Informed Care, and #133340307.2.3 Virtual Psychiatric and Clinical Guidance, and #133340307.2.4 Whole Health Peer Support) by providing specialized services for veterans that if not addressed in the community may result in needing inpatient psychiatric services. Providing the services in the community enables the individual to move forward with treatments and to be more successful in their recovery. In addition, by providing services in the community, exacerbation of symptoms is reduced resulting in a reduction of Emergency Department utilization and potentially preventable hospital admissions (RD‐1‐3).

**Relationship to Other Performing Providers’ Projects in RHP and Plan for Learning** **Collaborative:**

Hill Country is the local mental health authority that provides services within the following counties of RHP 8: Blanco and Llano. The other three local mental health authorities (Bluebonnet Trails, Center for Life Resources and Central Counties) provides mental health services to the remaining counties within RHP 8 and service areas do not overlap. No other provider in RHP 8 is specifically seeking to assist veterans; however, a number of the providers are targeting specific populations. These include Central Counties Temple Day Service project (#081771001.2.3), Bluebonnet Trails ACT Team Services project (#126844305.2.3) and Bluebonnet Trails’ Transitional Housing project (#126844305.2.1). Hill Country is committed to ongoing advancement of services for the individuals we serve and is willing to participate in learning collaboratives with other providers within the region to continually improve services and data collection and to identify how to address additional needs that may arise. Hill Country will participate in learning collaboratives that meets semi‐annually to discuss local disparities in care and the ways they have successfully gathered relevant data and ultimately better served the populations in the projects.

**Project Valuation:**

Project valuation is based on a weighted average of Achieving Waiver Goals, Addressing Community Needs, Project Scope, and Project Investment. The valuation for this project was based on economic evaluation model and extensive literature review conducted by professors at the University of Houston School of Public Health and University of Texas at Austin Center for Social Work Research. The valuation is supported by cost‐utility analysis which measures program cost in dollars and the health consequences in utility‐weighted units called quality‐ adjusted life‐years (QALYs). QALYs incorporate costs averted when known (e.g., emergency room visits that area avoided). The proposed program’s value is based on a monetary value of $50,000 per QALY gained due to the intervention multiplied by number of participants. The valuation on this project is based on 60 consumers over the life of the project.