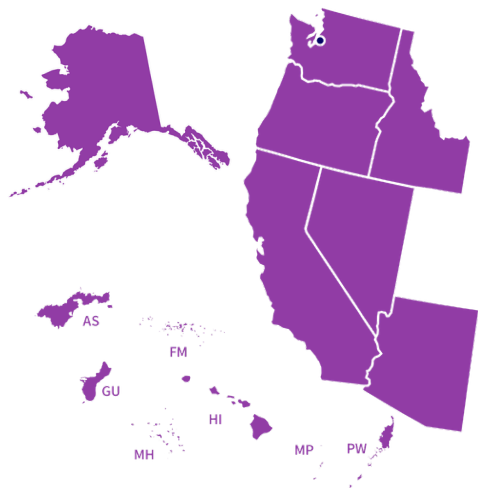


Implementation Project Profile: Mental Health Implementation in Action

How the Pacific West Hub helped behavioral health leaders turn implementation science into a foundation for lasting change.

Background



Behavioral health leaders are often responsible for planning, implementing, and sustaining mental health programs while managing limited time, staff, and resources.

In that environment, it can be difficult to step back from day-to-day demands and ask foundational questions:

- What are we trying to implement?
- What conditions will help it work?
- Where might we encounter barriers?

To make that process more tangible, the [Pacific West Hub](#) of the Center for Mental Health Implementation Support (CMHIS) developed **Mental Health Implementation in Action: A Practical Approach to Lasting Change**, an eight-session virtual learning community for people leading change across U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Regions 9 and 10.

Participants came from a range of clinical, community, and school-based settings, bringing different levels of implementation experience and different priorities.

What We Did

From February through April 2026, the Pacific West Hub delivered eight sessions, each focused on a core area of implementation. Participants were asked to bring a mental health practice or program they were planning, implementing, or sustaining and apply implementation science concepts to their own work, making connections to real-world practice.

Each session combined concise implementation frameworks, peer learning, and hands-on planning with Hub implementation coaches **Denna Vandersloot, MEd**, and **Akansha Vaswani-Bye, PhD**, as well as Pacific West Hub Co-Director **Christina Clayton**. Between sessions, participants used workbook activities to apply concepts to their own work.

Participants also had access to two tailored consultation sessions with the Pacific West Hub. This created a bridge from a time-limited learning community into more focused implementation support when teams identified needs that required deeper exploration.

Insights & Turning Points



Shared language built confidence: Brianna Hernandez, a program evaluator at Sound Behavioral Health, gained language and examples from peers that helped her discuss implementation challenges with leadership.



A systems perspective guided action: Hernandez examined leadership alignment and staff support as Sound strengthened its Depression Pathway implementation. The organization moved beyond email announcements to planned trainings, discussions, and clinical listening sessions.



Tailored support met different needs: Scott Charlton, a licensed marriage and family therapist involved in Kaiser Permanente's mental health training programs, valued individualized coaching that strengthened his approach to needs assessment.

“Looking at it more from a systems level and having strategies really helped me get leadership aligned. That was key.” — Brianna Hernandez, PhD, RAAC

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Core Topics Featured

- ✓ Engaging the community and assessing their mental health needs
- ✓ Identifying factors that influence implementation
- ✓ Deciding what support is needed to implement a new practice
- ✓ Using clinical progress to guide treatment
- ✓ Marketing programs and services
- ✓ Using data to improve service delivery
- ✓ Evaluating program outcomes
- ✓ Sustaining service delivery

Impact & What Endured

Hernandez credited her growing confidence with helping her lead Sound's Depression Pathway implementation, particularly its evaluation component. She reported that implementation work now starts with a logic model or roadmap. Additional measurement-based care training needs are leading Sound toward further work with the Pacific West Hub.

Charlton applied the tools shared in the learning community to other projects, conducting a needs assessment that informed departmental training decisions and developing a roadmap. Continued Hub consultation helped his team refine its training rollout.

Participants carried lessons learned into planning and continued implementation efforts. Their experiences highlight how important implementation science is in creating a strong, shared foundation.

"We can get a clear understanding of how to take a project from needs to quality improvement." — Scott Charlton

Lessons From the Field



Start with clarity before activity. Taking time to understand the practice, local context, readiness, roles, and barriers can lead to more intentional implementation decisions.



Expect implementation support to generate better questions. Surfacing new needs or areas for exploration can be a sign that a team is developing a fuller understanding of its implementation challenge.



Make learning immediately applicable. Using real projects, hands-on planning, and coaching helps participants connect implementation concepts to the work they're already doing.



Deliverables aren't the only measure of success.

Increased implementation capacity, clearer priorities, stronger relationships, and continued engagement can be meaningful indicators of progress.



Needs may evolve over time. A learning community can build foundational knowledge while also helping teams identify when more tailored consultation or technical assistance would be useful.



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