Women find worth through homeless shelter services

**Description:** The Racine Family-Centered Treatment Project addressed gaps in services available for women and their families in the Racine County area. The project team considered three business models for developing and providing evidence-based, family-centered treatment services. This collaborative effort resulted in the development and initial piloting of the Women of Worth (WOW) program, an effort to deliver trauma-informed, gender-specific care to women experiencing mental health and/or alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA) issues.

**Relevance:** For women exploring treatment options, having stable and secure housing and keeping their families united are two major considerations. Homeless shelters provide an important safety net, but they often are unable to provide intensive treatment to women with dual diagnoses, offer long-term housing for an entire family or address other challenges. Additionally, gender-specific care programs such as the WOW project can have a positive impact on the recovery process.

**Results:** Through implementation of the pilot, project partners learned that women value having a sense of independence and that the stigma of being in a homeless shelter affects treatment program participation. All five women enrolled in the WOW program completed a baseline assessment, and four of the five women remained in the program six weeks after their enrollment and completed their follow-up survey. Follow-up surveys showed small decreases in depression, anxiety and self-efficacy. Small increases in self-esteem and decision-making also were observed.

Another notable success was the training component. The program provided project partners and local health professionals with training in evidence-based best practices regarding gender-specific services, trauma-informed care and AODA issues among women. It also trained partners and providers in motivational interviewing and in many aspects of working with women who have mental health and/or AODA issues. Ultimately, the pilot project facilitated the adoption of more effective and sensitive ways to provide care to this population of women.

To track their growth as a team, project partners also completed the Wilder Collaborative Inventory, which showed that a cohesive group emerged. In addition, the pilot project received funding from the Runzheimer Foundation, BMO Harris and numerous private donations. Project leaders also secured a $400,000 Wisconsin Partnership Program implementation grant in 2013.


---

**KEY INFORMATION**

**Grantee:** Racine Interfaith Coalition, Therese M. Fellner

**Grant Title:** Racine Family-Centered Treatment Project: Pilot Study of Regional Collaboration for Women and Children’s Lifelong Health Improvement

**Academic Partner:** Ron Cisler, PhD, UW-Milwaukee, College of Health Sciences

**Dates:** April 1, 2012 – September 30, 2013

**Amount:** $50,000 over two years

**Leveraged Funding:** $21,450

**Program:** Community-Academic Partnership

**Project ID:** 2284