Redesigning Systems for Mental Health Treatment

The project team investigated models of integrated mental health and substance abuse treatment.

► Description: The Collaborative AODA Service: Identifying Cost Effective Models project explored best practice or evidence-based models for the development of multi-agency shared services and training in outpatient treatment for patients with a dual diagnosis of mental illness and substance abuse issues.

► Relevance: Nationally, there is a gap in the provision of cost effective and accessible mental health services for individuals who experience both severe psychological distress and a substance abuse disorder or dependency. Only a fraction of individuals with co-occurring emotional and substance abuse histories receive appropriate treatments.

► Partnerships: The Counseling Center of Milwaukee (now Pathfinders Milwaukee, Inc.), Jewish Family Services and Aurora Family Services are three major providers of outpatient mental health services in the metropolitan Milwaukee area. A three-agency team completed two comprehensive evaluations of mental health and substance abuse service delivery systems with the assistance of their partners at UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee.

► Results: The three partner agencies identified training and structural needs across agencies, as well as the degree of organizational readiness to adopt treatment innovations and several intervention models for potential local implementation.

The project reaffirmed the need for a comprehensive system redesign. The current mental health and substance abuse service delivery systems typically operate independently from each other and from other community support systems (case management, housing, etc.). Exploring and evaluating other programs revealed lack of widespread recognition of the common co-occurrence of substance abuse and mental illness and the need for dually-trained clinicians.

COLLABORATIVE AODA SERVICE: IDENTIFYING COST EFFECTIVE MODELS

Grantee: Jewish Family Services, Inc.
Contact: Jim Welsh, Jewish Family Services, Inc., jwelsh@jfsmilw.org
Academic Partner: Randall Brown, MD, PhD, Family Medicine, SMPH, randy.brown@fammed.wisc.edu
Award: $55,281 over two years and six months

Co-occurring disorders interact and affect each other: when a mental health problem goes untreated, the substance abuse problem usually gets worse. And when alcohol or drug abuse increases, mental health problems usually increase too.