



Developing A Better Understanding



RECOVERY IS BEAUTIFUL: ENSURING TIMELY ACCESS TO CARE

Transforming Ohio's community addiction and mental health systems to Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care based on the Recovery is Beautiful framework will incorporate a focus on ensuring timely access to care. Timely access to care is critical for individuals and families in need. The Recovery-Oriented System of Care framework is designed with individuals as the drivers of decisions about their care. Under this framework, services are built and systems are put in place so that individuals are able to access a full array of services and supports when and where they need them.

Recovery is Beautiful Principle: Ensuring Timely Access to Care

Local Boards ensure that Ohioans have access to a continuum of high quality, integrated care that is available in a timely manner for individuals and families in need of treatment and recovery supports.

Ensuring timely access to care starts with adequate funding for the entire system of care. Timely access is supported by practices such as open scheduling and adjusting appointment hours to meet the needs of clients and families. Ensuring access to care also includes developing strategies to: enhance approaches to engagement in services, improve access to services by removing barriers, improve retention in services, and establish and implement recovery management processes.

Research has shown that access to and receipt of a comprehensive array of medical, psychological, and social services improves engagement, retention, and treatment outcomes. Studies find that when an individual's full array of needs (e.g. food, clothing, medical care, family, psychiatric, vocational, education) are met, short-term and long-term outcomes including retention in treatment and reduction in symptoms are improved.

Understanding the Need for Increasing Access and Engagement

Each year, only about 10 percent of the people whose conditions meet the criteria for substance use disorders receive specialty behavioral health care (SAMHSA, 2003). While the percentage is somewhat higher for mental health, only about 45 percent of people who experience serious psychological stress indicative of mental illness receive specialty care in a given year (SAMHSA, 2006).

Individuals and families who do seek behavioral health services generally do so in the later stages of problem development (Hser et al., 1997). However, research on both mental health and substance use disorders indicates that the earlier in the course of the illness an intervention is initiated, the better the prognosis for long-term recovery (Melle, 2004; Moos & Moos, 2003).

*Adapted from the *Transformation of Behavioral Health Services in Philadelphia* report.



Strategies to Improve and Enhance Access to Care and Retention in Care

Communities throughout the nation are seeking strategies to increase awareness, enhance engagement, remove barriers, reduce stigma, and improve retention in services. Communities are transforming how individuals and families access and interact with their local systems of care by:

- ◇ Focusing on recovery and resilience while fostering cultures of hope within entire service systems and communities.
- ◇ Offering individuals a comprehensive menu of services and supports designed to support their path to recovery.
- ◇ Providing screenings and services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate.
- ◇ Promoting person-first approaches to outreach, engagement, and service delivery.
- ◇ Establishing “no wrong door” policies to engage individuals at whatever point they enter the system and determining the most appropriate type and level of care at that time.
- ◇ Creating welcoming environments and communities with atmospheres that promote strength, recovery, and resilience.
- ◇ Developing hot-lines and warm-lines to help direct individuals and families to the most appropriate care setting and facilitate scheduling.
- ◇ Eliminating geographic barriers by offering innovative transportation and/or service delivery solutions, including expanding access to telemedicine.
- ◇ Establishing collaborative partnerships with primary healthcare partners to offer integrated care services in both primary care and behavioral health service settings.
- ◇ Collaborating with community partners to promote earlier problem recognition, along with referral and engagement strategies.
- ◇ Developing and utilizing a range of interventions designed to enhance protective factors, to develop the resources and capabilities needed to maintain healthy lifestyles, and to foster wellness.
- ◇ Utilizing peers in outreach, engagement, and retention efforts.
- ◇ Utilizing peers to help identify and remove barriers to initial engagement, participation, and retention.
- ◇ Establishing recovery management protocols and services to provide ongoing supports to individuals and families.
- ◇ Celebrating recovery!

Increasing Access through Workforce Development and Coordination

A critical component to ensuring timely access to care is the existence of capacity within the workforce. Today’s community mental health and addiction workforce is not able to meet the demand for services. Waiting lists exist for access to professional services in many communities. Systems designed to readily respond to individual needs must be built upon a foundation of trained professionals and peers who are available and accessible to provide necessary services and supports.

Coordination among multiple service systems and multiple payers is also a critical component needed to ensure that individuals and families are able to access the most appropriate and effective services in a manner that is coordinated to meet the unique needs of the individual and his/her family.