

Title of Presentation: Responding to a mandate for evidence-based practices at the state and street levels: The Iowa experience

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Legislation in the Iowa 2004 session mandated that as of July 1, 2005, all monies from the Performance Partnership Block Grant program distributed to agencies providing mental health services in Iowa be used for “evidence-based practices”. While this is a worthy goal, it left many questions and issues to be addressed at the level of the state and local providers such as: What does it mean to provide “evidence-based practices”? Who gets to decide what is or is not evidence-based? How do you know if you are doing it? How do you balance support for innovation and flexibility with implementation of EBP’s, etc.

The Department of Human Services contracted with the Iowa Consortium for Mental Health to help them try and work through some of these issues, and to assist them in developing a process by which this vague mandate could be implemented at the “street level”. This presentation will describe the resulting process, and discuss some of the specific steps taken in Iowa to use this opportunity as one way of moving the state’s public mental health system towards an evidence-based mode.

The process involved 3 types of activities: 1) broad dissemination of EBP’s for adults with SMI and children with SED via training series offered statewide through videoconferences; 2) development and implementation of a standardized quarterly outcomes reporting and feedback system for all block-grant funded programs; 3) provision of technical assistance and promotion of peer-to-peer learning through establishment of “interest groups” for evidence-based practices for adults with SMI and children with SED.

Each of these activities and their results to date will be described, along with a discussion of the obstacles, strategies and merits of pursuing such an approach through a state-academic partnership.