

Assertive Community Treatment in Maine: Evaluating Fidelity, Service Use and Outcomes

Authors/Presenters:

Karen Glew, M.S.P.A.
Project Coordinator, Data Infrastructure Grant
DHS/Office of Quality Improvement
11 State House Station, 2nd Floor Management
Augusta, Maine
Karen.Glew@maine.gov

Director, Adult Mental Health Services
DHS/Office of Quality Improvement
11 State House Station, 2nd Floor Management
Augusta, Maine
Ron.Welch@maine.gov

Jay Yoe, Ph.D.
Program Director, Office of Quality Improvement
DHS/Office of Quality Improvement
11 State House Station, 2nd Floor Management
Augusta, Maine
Jay.Yoe@maine.gov
Ronald Welch

Emily Walsh Esq.
Planning and Research Assistant, Data
Infrastructure
DHHS/Office of Quality Improvement
11 State House Station, 2nd Floor, Marquand
Augusta, Maine
Emily.Walsh@maine.gov

Introduction

This study examines the service characteristics and fidelity of Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) for Adults with Serious Mental Illness in Maine. The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) currently funds ten ACT Teams that provide services in Maine. In a systematic effort to review and evaluate Evidence-Based mental health practices (EBP) in Maine a fidelity review was conducted during the Summer of 2006. This presentation examines characteristics of ACT services in Maine, the nature and consistency of practice across service providers, and the extent to which practices meet national fidelity guidelines. Using data obtained via the ACT fidelity reviews and service use and outcome data from DHHS administrative data systems, relationships between service fidelity, service use, and consumer outcomes are currently being evaluated.

Study Questions

The study is exploratory and designed to address the following questions: 1) What is the nature of ACT service delivery in Maine?; To what extent do ACT service providers meet national fidelity guidelines?; What is the relationship between ACT fidelity and service and consumer outcomes? (i.e., use of psychiatric inpatient services, improved health, functional stability, independent living, etc.).

Method

Fidelity reviews were conducted at each ACT team site using an evaluation team of two reviewers to allow assessment of inter-rater reliability. Representatives of Maine's DHHS Office of Quality Improvement, Adult Mental Health Services and one consumer served as fidelity evaluators. Data collection tools included 1) consumer interviews 2) ACT Team Leader interview 3) Clinician interview and 4) Substance Abuse Counselor interview. In addition, 10 records from each ACT team were reviewed. All tools were developed from the Implementation Resource Kit.

Preliminary Findings

Based on the preliminary findings of the ten ACT teams, Maine had a moderately high fidelity score. An overall average of the ten ACT teams resulted in a fidelity score of 4.04. Fidelity ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest, 4.04 is a moderately high finding of for a fidelity average. Ranges for the overall average were 4.44 to 3.48. More specifically, domain averages for the ten ACT teams individually demonstrated more variability. The domain area of Human Resources = 4.26 and Organization Boundaries = 4.56 were higher on the fidelity scale while Nature of Services was lower on the fidelity scale with a 3.31. Domain averages for the ten

ACT teams individually demonstrated more variability most specifically in the Nature of Services domain with ranges from 4.11 to 2.11. In addition to the fidelity review, ACT teams were interviewed and presented with their individual ACT team fidelity scores in comparison to the statewide aggregate fidelity scores. Follow-up meetings were conducted with each ACT team to review and interpret their fidelity scores and to provide an opportunity to discuss programmatic and service delivery issues and challenges as well as provide feedback on the review methodology and ACT fidelity guidelines. This process provided additional information as to what challenges and barriers individual ACT teams face depending on 1) geographical location 2) diagnosis of individuals being supported by ACT teams and 3) how current policies, practices and regulations are impacting fidelity scores.

Discussion

The discussion will highlight the importance of fidelity assessment and its relationship to service and consumer outcomes, the strengths and limitations of the ACT fidelity tool and review methodology employed. Implications of the results of the ACT fidelity review for ongoing quality improvement efforts and implementation of evidence-based practices in Maine are also discussed.