



National Association for Rural Mental Health

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Developing Essential County Behavioral Health Services to Reduce the Prevalence of Persons with Mental Illness and Substance Use Conditions in County Jails

THE PROBLEM: The prevalence of persons with mental illness and substance use conditions in county jails has become an acute national problem. Multiple sources estimate that up to 25% of this jail population has a mental condition and up to 50% has a substance use condition, with a high level of comorbidity between the two. Thus, on any given day, county jails are caring for more than 550,000 persons with these illnesses. This is a very costly problem for counties, since none of the health care delivered in county jails currently can be reimbursed by Medicaid.

THE STEPPING UP INITIATIVE: To begin addressing this issue, the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the Council of State Governments (CSG) have undertaken the Stepping Up Initiative. This initiative will have three phases: stepping up (county boards pass a resolution to address the issue, convene key county departments, and develop a strategic implementation plan); technical assistance (counties receive advice and assistance on epidemiology, improving service coordination, case management), and a national summit (lead counties present results and help induct and provide advice to new counties entering the initiative).

ESSENTIAL TRANSFORMATION OF COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

PROGRAMS: The National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors (NACBHDD) believes strongly that a critical key to the success of this initiative will be the transformational activities and programs undertaken by county mental health/substance use/behavioral health departments. These entities will need to improve case management, medication and psychosocial service delivery, and system organization to prevent persons at risk from becoming incarcerated; they also will need to develop front end crisis intervention programs, including community warm lines, crisis intervention training for police, and a restoration process/center to divert people from incarceration; and they will need to coordinate behavioral health care with housing, job, and social supports.

NACBHDD PROGRAM: Currently, the NACO-CSG Initiative lacks the behavioral health expertise to provide essential assistance to county behavioral health

departments to initiate these program transformations. Therefore, NACBHDD is undertaking a new program to provide this assistance to counties. To make the necessary expertise, documents, and collaborations available, NACBHDD will contract for expert assistance, organize focus groups, learning communities, and other needed tools to improve and transform county behavioral health programs.

NACBHDD PARTNERS: Several key NACBHDD Corporate Partners will join us in this initiative. These include Alkermes, Inc., Centene Corp., Johnson and Johnson Health Care Systems, Inc., Optum, Inc., Otsuka America Pharmaceuticals, Inc., and Takeda Pharmaceuticals America, Inc. In addition, our NACBHDD affiliate, the National Association for Rural Mental Health, will participate in the initiative

The NACBHDD program will be initiated on October 1, 2015.

For further information, please contact Ron Manderscheid, Executive Director at rmanderscheid@nacbhd.org or 202-553-1827.