

NEW HAMPSHIRE PUBLIC MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMER SURVEY PROJECT

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This summary is based on a larger, more comprehensive report analyzing New Hampshire's Community Mental Health Center Services. To download the full report, visit www.iod.unh.edu/pmhs.html.



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The Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire was established in 1987 to provide a coherent university-based focus to improve knowledge, policies, and practices related to the lives of persons with disabilities into their schools and communities.

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS DECEMBER 2008

NEW STUDY RELEASED ASSESSING CONSUMER PERSPECTIVES OF COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CENTER SERVICES IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

During 2008, the Institute on Disability, the UNH Survey Center, the Bureau of Behavioral Health, and New Hampshire's 10 regional Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) collaborated on a unique project to learn about consumer perspectives regarding the quality of mental health services received. Adults, youth ages 14-17, and family members of children ages 0-17 were surveyed, with response rates for each group of 57%, 47% and 55%, respectively. The results from the survey provide the best statewide consumer perspective to date on the quality and effectiveness of New Hampshire's community mental health service system. As the survey will be implemented on an annual basis, the results can be used as a benchmark to track the impact of changes to the system in the years ahead.

The full report (available from www.iod.unh.edu/pmhs.html) documents a range of strengths and challenges concerning mental health services provided through the state's CMHCs.

Strengths Identified Include:

- ◆ *Responsive CMHC staff:* hundreds of examples were identified describing the effectiveness of individual staff and the efforts they took to ensure positive outcomes among consumers.
- ◆ *Effective Supports:* consumers remarked on the effectiveness of individual agencies and their ability to bring together a range of supports to help them manage their illness.
- ◆ *Cultural Sensitivity:* most consumers agreed that staff were sensitive to their cultural background, including race, religion and language.
- ◆ *Improved Outcomes:* consumers pointed to decreased police involvement and increased school attendance among youth.

Challenges to Consumer Recovery Include:

- ◆ *Staffing Support:* The most frequent concern written in by consumers of all three survey groups focused on the limited availability of effective staffing support. Issues raised in this area include: staff turnover, lack of specialists, limited availability of gender or age appropriate staff, and/or general staff availability (respondents cited missed appointments by staff, long waiting times for appointments, and other scheduling problems).
- ◆ *Alcohol and Drug Treatment Services:* Even though 78% of adults and 66% of youth noted that staff asked them about alcohol or drug use, only 56% of adults and 38% of youth potentially needing services were offered services to deal with alcohol or drug issues.
- ◆ *Transition Planning for Youth:* Despite the major shift in service availability that occurs when youth transition to the adult service system, only 58% of 17 year olds reported having a transition plan in place with CMHC staff.
- ◆ *Understanding the Impacts of Medications:* About one in five adults indicated that staff did not tell them what side effects they may experience.
- ◆ *Improving Access to Existing Services and Need for Additional Services:* Consumers highlighted a range of issues on which to follow up, such as: additional after-school or weekend times for appointments, better outreach to families to participate in the treatment process, and better emergency services.

In addition to the challenges identified above, the report indicates that there are other challenges to consumer recovery which need to be addressed by the broader community of service providers and advocates, notably: continuation of mental health treatment during incarceration, improving availability of public transportation to ensure continued access to services, and addressing the impact that social isolation and poverty can have on the ability for consumers to successfully manage their illnesses.

The report also provides a baseline estimate on how New Hampshire is doing relative to federal outcome areas. The percent of consumers with positive scores in each area by survey group follows:

- ◆ *Adults:* Quality/Appropriateness (80%), General Satisfaction (79%), Access (72%), Participation in Treatment (67%), Functioning (65%), Social Connectedness (61%), and other Outcomes (61%),
- ◆ *Youth Ages 14-17:* Cultural Sensitivity (91%), Social Connectedness (90%), General Satisfaction (78%), Access (77%), Participation in Treatment (73%), Functioning (71%), and other Outcomes (69%).
- ◆ *Family Members of Children 0-17:* Cultural Sensitivity (90%), Participation in Treatment (85%), Social Connectedness (81%), Access (77%), General Satisfaction (73%), Functioning (57%) and other Outcomes (55%).

To learn more, readers are encouraged to read the full report which can be downloaded at www.iod.unh.edu/pmhs.html. The report includes copies of the original surveys, a breakdown of each survey item, as well as results at the center level.

This summary is based on findings from the 2008 Public Mental Health Consumer Survey Project. The project was funded by the Data Infrastructure Grants program of the Center for Mental Health Services of the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The work represents a collaborative partnership between the Bureau of Behavioral Health, DHHS, Institute on Disability and UNH Survey Center, and New Hampshire's Community Mental Health Centers.

This document is available in alternative formats upon request.