CHI²

Center for Healthcare Integration & Innovation

Community Mental Health Association of Michigan

Recommendations on Advancing the Nation's Mental Health Systems

February 2022

Center for Healthcare Integration and Innovation
Community Mental Health Association of Michigan

Recommendations on Advancing the Nation's Mental Health Systems

February 2022

Abstract

The following is a synthesis of recommendations on transforming and strengthening the nations mental health systems from Health Affairs (2021), Legal Action Center (2020), RAND Corporation (2021), National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (2021), and Well Being Trust (2020). Central to this objective is addressing equity, pathways to care, access to care, and the behavioral health care workforce.

Equity

- Targeting Social Determinants
    - Support policies which target social determinants that impact health
- Addressing Racism
    - Address social/political constructs and historical systemic injustices that disproportionately impact the health of people of color, and eliminate inequitable conditions for people with mental health and substance use conditions
    - Include race, ethnicity, and language data collection in MH/SUD programs
    - Acknowledge and address the history of racism in public health systems through policies and investments that eliminate the disproportionate impact on people of color
- Promoting Economic Stability
    - Ensure a living wage and support social programs which decrease poverty
- Improving Living Environments
    - Support policies that improve living environment by addressing affordable housing, eradicating environmental pollution, ensuring minimum housing standards, and securing rights of tenants

Pathways to Care

- Early Identification and Prevention
    - Provide routine MH/SUD screenings through health systems and primary care providers
    - Promote mental health education as an integral part of a comprehensive health education curriculum to destigmatize mental health, enhance knowledge of skills for prevention, and promote increased help-seeking; incentivize evidence-based interventions for youth
    - Create public awareness campaigns that normalize the discussion around mental health and treatment

- Integration
  - Increase access to comprehensive services by supporting and expanding integrated primary care and behavioral health care models; train primary care providers to identify and understand behavioral health needs to inform suitable referrals
  - Create guidelines for and institutionalize a model for continuum of care
- Pre-Arrest Diversion & Crisis Intervention
  - Promote treatment, behavioral health services, and social resources instead of criminalization of behavioral health conditions; Ensure appropriate response to individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis by trained professionals skilled in de-escalation
  - Implement an evidence-based crisis response system to limit interaction with police and reduce recidivism; Encourage collaboration between law enforcement, elected officials, providers, and other stakeholders to foster diversion from the criminal justice system to proper behavioral health care and reduce stigma related to mental health

Access to Care

- Telehealth and Broadband
  - Codify expansion of digital and telehealth services to ensure that they are covered by insurance, that clinicians are adequately reimbursed, and that consumers know how to use them
  - Improve technological infrastructure to ensure broadband accessibility, particularly in rural and remote areas
- Community Outreach
  - Establish and expand community-based organizations which offer a wide range of services, including treatment of behavioral health conditions and social services
  - Support the creation of mobile health clinics that provide screening, medication management, referral, and timely access to care
- Peer Support Services
  - Expand availability and quality of peer support specialists through training, credentialing, and reimbursement
- Data Systems
  - Support expansion of data structures to allow for public health agencies to link clinical outcome data for analysis to inform system improvement
- Standards and Accountability
  - Hold systems accountable to evidence-based standards of quality care that improve quality of life outcomes
  - Increase accountability by focusing on outcomes on both the individual and population levels
- Lower Threshold for Treatment
  - Support programs that make minimal demands on patients to participate in behavioral health treatment, such as not requiring drug abstinence or commitment to a specific number of treatment sessions, to improve retention
- Culturally and Linguistically Effective Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Care
  - Increase the capacity of culturally and linguistically effective mental health and substance use disorder care by incentivizing states and localities to develop policies and practices which correspond to community needs
- Parity and Coverage

       ○ Require health plans to provide mental health and substance use coverage consistent with medical necessity standards for physical health care

       ○ Close coverage gaps by incentivizing the expansion of Medicaid eligibility

       ○ Maximize enrollment by removing barriers; extend enrollment periods, fund outreach programs, streamline process to make enrollment easier

Workforce

- Scholarships and Loan Repayment Programs
  - Expand scholarship, fellowship, and loan forgiveness programs for mental health specialty workers to meet workforce needs, particularly in underserved areas
- Payment
  - Ensure that mental health and substance use disorder providers are paid on par with comparable health care providers
- Diversity
  - Support and expand a diverse mental health and substance use disorder workforce to sensitively meet community needs
  - Improve cultural competency and trauma-informed care training

References

Alegría, M., Frank, R. G., Hansen, H. B., Sharfstein, J. M., Shim, R. S., & Tierney, M. (2021). Transforming Mental Health and Addiction Services. *Health Affairs*, *40*(2), 226–234. https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.01472

Legal Action Center. (n.d.). *Coalition for whole health recommendations to the Biden-Harris transition team to strengthen access to mental health and substance use disorder coverage*. Legal Action Center. Retrieved from https://www.lac.org/assets/files/Final-Coalition-for-Whole-Health-Biden-Harris-Transition-Team-Recommendations.pdf

McBain, R. K., Eberhart, N. K., Breslau, J., Frank, L., Burnam, M. A., Kareddy, V., & Simmons, M. M. (2021, January 11). *Transforming mental health care in the United States*. RAND Corporation. Retrieved February 10, 2022, from https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RBA889-1.html

National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) and the NASMHPD Research Institute (NRI). (2021, September). *Improving behavioral health services for individuals with SMI in rural and remote communities*. SMIAdvisor. Retrieved February 10, 2022, from https://smiadviser.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Improving-Behavioral-Health-Services-for-Individuals-with-SMI-in-Rural-and-Remote-Communities-Full-Report-September-2021.pdf

Well Being Trust. (2020, December). *A Unified Vision for Transforming Mental Health and Substance Use Care*. Well Being Trust. Retrieved February 10, 2022, from https://wellbeingtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Unified-Vision-v8-10_28_2020.pdf

The Center for Healthcare Integration and Innovation (CHI²) is the research and analysis office within the Community Mental Health Association of Michigan (CMHAM). The Center, in partnership with the members of the CMH Association, leaders, researchers, consultants and advisors from across Michigan and the country, issues white papers and analyses on a range of healthcare issues with a focus on behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disability services.

The Community Mental Health Association of Michigan (CMHA) is the state association representing Michigan's public mental health system – the state's Community Mental Health (CMH) centers, the public Prepaid Inpatient Health Plans ((PIHP) public health plans formed and governed by the CMH centers) and the providers within the CMH and PIHP provider networks. Every year, these members serve over 300,000 Michigan residents with mental health, intellectual/developmental disability, and substance use disorder needs. Information on CMHA can be found at www.cmham.org or by calling (517) 374-6848.