Diverting Youth from Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities: Early Feedback from Service Providers, Caregivers and Youth

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Background

- Between 50% and 75% of youth in foster care have serious mental health issues, which pose significant challenges for child welfare agencies attempting to meet youths' needs (Landsverk, Burns, Stambaugh, & Reutz, 2006).
- Youth whose mental health needs escalate to Severe Emotional Disorders (SED) may require extensive and costly treatment in Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTF; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2008).

Grant Description

- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services selected nine states to establish, operate, and evaluate a demonstration project designed to keep youth in need of a PRTF placement in their home community while receiving mental health treatment.
- The State of Kansas implemented the Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility Community-based Alternatives (PRTF CBA) Grant to divert youth at risk for PRTF placements and to reduce the length of time spent in PRTFs for youth already there.
- Qualifying youth have SED and meet admission criteria for a PRTF placement.
- The PRTF CBA Grant offers the following services: Case management, individual therapy, family therapy, crisis intervention, attendant care, respite care, psychosocial group work, independent living services, family resource homes, and parent support.

Method

Procedure and Measures

- Two data collection phases: Spring to Summer 2009; Fall 2010 to Spring 2011.
- Surveys and phone interviews with open- and close-ended items targeted information on the operation, benefits and challenges of the PRTF CBA Grant; feedback on services; and factors impacting decisions to enroll youth.

Sample

First Phase of Data Collection

- 11 PRTF clinical directors, 24 PRTF liaisons, 14 community-based services (CBS) directors, 137 case managers, 31 parent support specialists, 21 youth (ages 12 years and older) who enrolled on the PRTF CBA Grant for two or more months.
- Average time in current position ranged from 3.5 to 15.9 years.
- Average time in the mental health field ranged from 5.9 to 15.9 years.
- On average, youth were 15.9 years old and had been enrolled on the grant for 7 months.

Second Phase of Data Collection

- 19 CBS directors, 22 PRTF mental health screeners, 27 caregivers, 10 youth.
- PRTF screeners conducted screens an average of 9.4 years (range: 0.3-20.0) and worked in the mental health field an average of 15.9 years (range: 3.0 – 38.0).
- CBS director demographic data compares to data collected in first phase.

Results

Strengths of PRTF CBA Grant Services

- Additional services for youth transitioning to adulthood.
- More intense and frequent services.
- Family support to keep children at home.
- Faster enrollment and access to services compared to other state options.
- When answering how well the grant meets needs, 74% of respondents reported "Somewhat" to "Extremely".

Types of Helpful Services on PRTF CBA Grant

Type of Helpful Service	Youth	Caregivers
Provides a professional to talk with youth.	54.2%	28.6%
Improves mental health and daily functioning.	46.8%	61.9%
Teaches youth new skills, e.g., job searching, job training, resume writing.	27.3%	9.5%
Builds relationships with friends and family.	13.0%	9.5%

- Overall, youth and caregivers' perspectives on types of helpful services differed. For example, 54.2% of youth versus 28.6% of caregivers rated talking to a professional as a helpful service.

Disincentives of PRTF CBA Grant

Disincentives for Offering PRTF CBA Grant Services

- Lack of staff and resources to offer all grant services statewide.
- Complicated eligibility requirements.
- Costly data collection and reporting procedures.

Disincentives of PRTF CBA Grant

Reasons for Providers Recommending PRTF Placement over PRTF CBA Grant

- Inability to assure safety for youth and others.
- High risk of youth running away if remaining at home.
- Chronicity of youths' mental health issues makes in-home treatment more questionable.

Reasons that Families do not Choose PRTF CBA Grant

- The family experiencing multiple stressors beyond youths' needs.
- Limited availability of a natural support system.
- The youth experiencing a prior placement in a PRTF facility.

Challenges of PRTF CBA Grant Services

Type of Challenge	PRTF Screeners	CBS Directors
Disincentives to agencies for offering grant services.	--	52.6%
Lack of ease enrolling youth on grant.	--	36.9%
PRTF CBA Grant not recommended when youth have severe mental health issues.	90.9%	--
PRTF CBA Grant not recommended when youth's history poses high safety risks to self and others.	90.9%	--

- Most PRTF Screeners do not recommend the PRTF CBA Grants to families when youth experience severe mental health issues and have a history of safety risks.

Conclusion

Strengths

"The PRTF [grant] program is one of the best that the state has to offer." (Caregiver)

- Increased access to needed services.
- Better mental health functioning.
- More family support.
- Treatment for youth in the home setting.

Challenges

"[The grant program] does not meet needs because… we lack the…service providers [and]…financial funding." (A CBS director)

- Cumbersome enrollment, paperwork and eligibility requirements.
- Inability to assure safety for youth and others.

Recommendations

- Streamline eligibility, enrollment and service delivery procedures.
- Simplify data collection and paperwork requirements.

References

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2008). *Out-of-home services for emotional or behavioral problems among youths aged 12-17: 2002 to 2006.* Rockville, MD: Author.

Landsverk, J. A., Burns, B. J., Stambaugh, L. F., & Reutz, R. A. R. (2006). *Mental health care for children and adolescents in foster care: Review of research literature.* Seattle, WA: Casey Family Programs.