

Transforming Local Behavioral Health Systems

Overview:

We all know too well that the toll of mental illness is staggering across the nation and in our own communities. It is estimated that about 20 percent of people in the general population across the country have a “recent history” of a mental health condition and almost three-quarters of whom also have substance use disorders. What is less known is that individuals with a developmental disability are at a higher risk than the general population to develop a mental health condition, do not have equal access to mental health and substance abuse services, and that many behavioral health and medical providers report that they lack the necessary skills to diagnosis and provide effective mental health intervention for this population.

Effective overall care requires knowing the physical, mental and social needs of the patient population being served in as much detail as possible.

In response to this disparity, on December 8, 2017 Valley Mountain Regional Center was awarded funding from the Mental Health Service Act (MHSA) in partnership with the California Department of Mental Health and Department of Developmental Services. In the development of this unique opportunity Valley Mountain Regional Center in collaboration with Stanislaus County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services pledged their commitment and accountability to bring to the community recognized experts and leaders in the field of co-occurring disorders and developmental disability.

The overarching “Bridging the Gap: Co-occurring Disorders and Developmental Disabilities” three year conference series is designed to address the specific needs of both youth and adults served by Valley Mountain Regional Center who without community inclusion struggle to be identified and receive appropriate behavioral health and substance abuse services both within the community and legal justice system.

It is anticipated that the information shared by recognized experts and leaders in the field of co-occurring disorders and developmental disability will result in an increased awareness of behavioral health disorders in this population among primary care providers and other medically trained staff, as well as skillful attention to behavioral aspects of what is typically attributed to “developmental” disorders. Similarly, in specialty behavioral health settings that serve adults and youth with serious mental illnesses, it is anticipated that providers will have the opportunity to gain a new understanding of individuals with a developmental disability and will be empowered to better provide effective behavioral health interventions.

Why You Should Attend:

For most individuals crisis services are critical for individuals with significant behavioral health needs. For many of these individuals, the onset of a crisis may be their first interaction with the mental health system or first responders. When crisis services are unavailable or ineffective, other services from the community safety net, such as law enforcement and hospital emergency departments (ED), must fill the gap, sometimes in ways that may actually result in further traumatization. Typically, reliance on EDs and law enforcement, which generally must manage a wide array of health and safety matters, is less effective and more expensive than specialized, community-based MH crisis intervention models of care. However, individuals with a developmental disability struggle with unmet and often ignored substance abuse and behavioral health treatment needs in our local communities. Due to their inadequately managed treatment needs, they repeatedly come to the attention of first responders, jails and local emergency rooms become de-facto mental health providers, or they are simply turned away and they and their family are left to struggle with limited hope and inadequate support.



Our goal with respect to the “Bridging the Gap” conference is to support the implementation of policies and programs that help individuals with co-occurring disorders and developmental disability to obtain effective, efficient mental health care when and where it’s needed. We believe that every community across the state is an important partner in our efforts to transform the surrounding mental health systems in pursuit of that goal. As part of that pursuit Valley Mountain Regional Center works with local cities, counties, and regions to build stronger local partnerships in which key community partners merge their strengths and resources, creating effective, efficient, and accountable delivery systems to effectively meet the needs of their local populations which includes those with a developmental disability.
