

Work Begins on Quality Measurement System for Addiction Treatment Programs

Data collection has begun for a new quality measurement system for addiction treatment programs.

New York is one of six states selected to pilot Atlas, an addiction treatment locator, analysis and standards tool being developed by the nonprofit Shatterproof. The state Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services has partnered with Shatterproof—which is focused on ending the devastation that addiction brings to families—on the development and implementation of Atlas in New York.

All specialty addiction-treatment facilities in the state are being asked to participate in a survey of their practices and services, Shatterproof said, and they're being asked to invite their patients to participate in an experience survey.

A third data source for Atlas will be developed through working with OASAS, state partners and commercial insurers to calculate claims-based measures of care, Samantha Arsenault, vice president of national treatment quality initiatives at Shatterproof, told *Crain's*.

"New York state, in particular, had support from the provider community when they submitted to participate," Arsenault said, adding that the providers said: "We want the ability to benchmark ourselves and make information transparent to patients."

The idea for Atlas came from what the leadership team at Shatterproof viewed as a limited availability of addiction treatment nationally that is using best practices, Arsenault said. That limited availability is because of stigma and a misalignment of market forces with practices that aren't supported by evidence, she said.

People oftentimes have more information when purchasing a spice rack online, for example, she explained, than when seeking addiction treatment services. Despite many good providers, she said, there are barriers when it comes to adopting best practices.

Atlas is expected to provide patients and their families objective and reliable information on best practices at addiction treatment facilities and to empower them to make informed decisions on treatment, Shatterproof said. In New York, Atlas will include information on all facilities and allow users to compare programs side by side or by filtering criteria such as location, program needs or insurance carrier. Addiction treatment providers who receive the survey but do not respond will still be listed on the Atlas website—expected to go live in May—with a note that quality information was not available.

In addition, there will be a password-protected site for addiction treatment providers to find information on quality improvement as well as a platform for the state and payers. The latter is expected to aid with reimbursement and the shift toward valued-based care for addiction treatment.

"We're really trying to take comprehensive approach," Arsenault said. "A rising tide lifts all ships."

Allegra Schorr, president of the Coalition of Medication-Assisted Treatment Providers and Advocates of New York State, is on the state advisory committee for Atlas.

"The goal is to have a directory that will allow people to make a more informed decision when they're picking a provider," Schorr said.

She added that it's important to have a balance between patient and family feedback as well as clinical information, such as patient outcomes and medications that patients receive.

"New York is proud to be involved with this innovative effort to help improve addiction care, and ensure that people throughout the state will receive the same quality of care no matter where they go," OASAS said in a statement provided to *Crain's*.

In addition to New York, the pilot states are Delaware, Louisiana, Massachusetts, North Carolina and West Virginia.

The pilot states are politically diverse and include both urban and rural settings, Arsenault of Shatterproof said. The diversity will help to expand Atlas more rapidly after its first phase, which is being funded by \$5 million from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Arnold Ventures and a coalition of national health plans.