Spring Conference Attracts Over 400 Participants

We are pleased to report that the i2i Center's inaugural event – *Collaborating for Change* -- Spring Conference, June 11-12 in Raleigh was a successful and productive event for over 400 professionals from public and private systems, advocates, consumers and state agency staff alike. A total of ten sessions were offered on June 11th ranging from federal updates and CMS activities on care integration to value-based reimbursement and whole person care to community engagement. On the 12[th,] the Closing Plenary session focused on the state's plan to move the mild to moderate Medicaid MH/SUD population into a standard healthcare plan from the perspective of a professional who has consulted on such changes in other states and from a consumer's point of view through a panel discussion.

To get some insight into a few of the session topics, several attendees offered an overview of what they learned at the conference.

Kim Tizzard, Director of Family Support for the Autism Society of NC attended the session entitled "Embedding a Whole Person Approach in the Emerging System of I/DD Services" along with approximately 50 others. According to Tizzard, speaker Josh Boynton, managing director of Vertess provided the national and historical perspective on the state of the I/DD service system and core elements of successful managed care programs. Josh shared personal and professional experiences with systems change and managed care, emphasizing the critical role of families, direct support professionals, social determinants, and advocacy in supporting person centered living for individuals with I/DD.

Karen Luken, project director for the Medical Health Home initiative, provided an overview of the public system must-haves compiled by the NC Developmental Disabilities Consortium, emphasizing accountability, access and continuity of care, engagement, and a whole person focus. A highlight of the session was the energetic and open conversation among attendees and presenters that addressed a wide range of topics and recommendations. These included the role of health information exchange in promoting whole person care, the need for flexible approaches to services, family support strategies, lessons learned in other states, and the importance of innovation.

According to Tizzard, "the audience reflected the many voices that are invested in improving services and supports for individuals with I/DD and families, including families, disability provider organizations, state government, healthcare professionals, advocates, MCOs, and administrators. This diversity added to the richness of the discussion."

Kelly Friedlander, Community Bridges Consulting Group, attended and participated in the "Best (and Worst) Practices in Community Engagement" session along with approximately 70 others. She noted that during this interactive session, Robert Albright, Director of Programs at FSG, provided information and led attendees through a series of activities to deepen their understanding of community engagement. Topics covered included effectively integrating

community voices, ensuring participation of historically excluded communities, and engaging stakeholders in sensitive conversations about race, class and culture. Through group discussion, attendees learned from and got to know each other. Following the presentation, Albright facilitated a discussion on community engagement among Walt Caison with the Division of MH/DD/SAS, Vaughn Crawford of Alliance Behavioral Healthcare, and myself. The panelist spoke of their experiences fostering community engagement in North Carolina and lessons they'd learned to help bring focus to NC's engagement climate.

Michael Owen, consultant, attended the session entitled, "Will NC's System of Care Principles Survive Medicaid Transformation?" led by Robert Atkins, MD, Senior Medical Director of Aetna Medicaid along with approximately 80 other professionals. According to Owen, Dr. Atkins provided the history of Aetna's commitment to the principles and practices of the System of Care. He presented examples of research-based collaborative practices that Aetna has supported related to person-centered treatment, supportive housing, and practices that address the social determinants of health. Many of the examples were of projects that served adults with mental illness. He provided details of an Aetna supported initiative in Maricopa County, AZ and delineated the different contributions to the System of Care made by Aetna and its Foundation.

Owen said, "In general, Dr. Atkins presented a knowledgeable perspective on the values and principles of System of Care. He expressed optimism that these principles are very likely to survive Medicaid transformation. What was still unclear is how the current infrastructure that supports NC's System of Care will be sustained into the future."

One of the larger sessions with over 140 registrants, "Centerpiece of Medicaid Transformation: Care Management," focused on the key components of the Medicaid Transformation—the care management role. Kelly Crosbie, Senior Program Manager, Health Transformations, at DHHS offered an overview from the State's perspective on what care management will look like under Medicaid Transformation. In the State's concept papers and in legislation and in discussions, care management is described as the key way in which consumers will navigate the system. For a consumer with high physical health needs and some behavioral health needs, having a care manager who can assist in understanding what services and supports are needed and how to access them will make the difference in how successful the system can be in addressing their needs. Andrew Clendenin, Director of Behavioral Health Integration at CCNC and Danika Mills, CCNC Director of Care Management provided details about DHHS's Access model. In addition, Jodi Fenner, with AmeriHealth and Beth Melcher, Executive Vice President, Care Management Division for Alliance Behavioral Healthcare, talked about their real world experience with care management in the current system.

To get more session details, all speaker handouts from the Spring Conference are available on the i2i website for download.

In addition to the session content, this event offered attendees valuable networking opportunities and access to a variety of organizations that participated as exhibitors ranging from those that offer technology solutions, services, and policy, to representation from organizations that will be applying to manage NC's Medicaid program and others. To view the full list of exhibitors and their contact information, click here.

If you have not already seen them, all the photos from the conference are online and are available for you to save and use as you see fit.