

The Health Care Workforce Transformation Fund supports training programs that address workforce skill needs identified by health care providers as they work to improve patient care and reduce costs. Commonwealth Corporation administers this fund on behalf of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.

Behavioral Health Network (BHN), a non-profit community behavioral health service agency, provides comprehensive, outcome-driven behavioral health care in Western Massachusetts.



Workforce Challenge:

Providers in Western MA are presented with an increasingly complex patient population. Up to 40% of patients presenting for routine or sub-acute care also have mental health (MH) and/or substance abuse (SU) problems that are not treated elsewhere. Additionally, a significant number of BHN's patients with serious mental illness are obese, have diabetes, hypertension, asthma or chronic pulmonary disease.

Currently, clinicians are not prepared to care for patients with these challenges. Graduate schools do not offer formal training or internship experiences in primary care for behavioral health providers and they provide limited exposure for medical students into the behavioral health field. In addition, clinicians in primary care and behavioral health do not typically work in collaborative teams, missing the opportunity to be available for real-time interventions and hand-offs.

“ Learning how critical the connection between behavioral health and physical health really is not only gave me a place to start with patients, it taught me how to help patients make small changes that have a positive impact on their functioning and develop a healthier version of themselves. It really gave me a good foundation to start as a new Integrated Behavioral Health Consultant.”

-Lauren Favorite, Integrated Behavioral Health Consultant

“ Having the learning activities tied to the core competencies has helped streamline the on-boarding of new staff. The trainings meet the needs of differing learning styles and allow for flexibility to accommodate both new and seasoned staff.”

-Tina Marie Fioroni, LMHC, Integration Program Director

Training Strategy and Expected Outcomes:

BHN is providing training to their clinicians to support real-time collaborative care delivery and co-located, integrated practices with its regional partners. This will allow the clinicians to provide interventions that are expected to improve the quality and efficiency of patient care, resulting in better health outcomes and lower overall health care costs. BHN has changed the way they approach orientation, training and evaluation of new and existing staff by increasing the development and practice of knowledge and skills necessary to engage in integrated care coordination and outreach activities with shared primary care practice patients. In a short time frame, they have already seen an average 37% increase in primary care practice patient initiation and engagement rates in MH/SU services. BHN leaders anticipate this will lead to a reduced amount of no-shows and decrease in the amount of time primary care practitioners spend with patients needing behavioral health services since there will be a trained clinician available for quick interventions, and improved patient adherence to treatment plans.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NETWORK CURRICULA

BHN staff developed comprehensive curricula. Their Primary Care Behavioral Health Training Series covers 46-hours of competency-based training to be provided and mastered over a period of 12-months, starting at orientation. Their Health Literacy e-Learning Series was approved for CEUs by the American Psychological Association, the National Association of Social Workers, and the MA Mental Health Counselors Association.