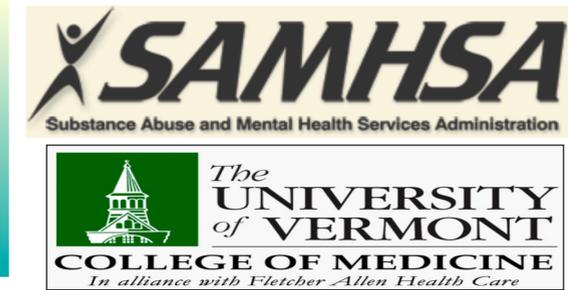


Evaluating Access and Barriers to Services in a Young Adult System of Care

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Background

In the fall of 2008, Vermont was awarded a SAMHSA CMHI cooperative agreement to develop a mental health system of care for young adult aged 16-21 years.

This effort, the *Young Adults in Transition* (YIT) project, is being led by a team from the Vermont Department of Mental Health and the Vermont Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health.

The Vermont Child Health Improvement Program (VCHIP) at the University of Vermont College of Medicine is conducting the evaluation. IRB approval was obtained for the evaluation.

The project is being implemented in 12 Vermont regional mental health and related partner agencies covering the entire state.

Purpose

Young adults entering the mental health system of care do so by a variety of different pathways, and initial assessments vary from comprehensive to highly focused.

To help the YIT evaluation achieve the goal of assessing barriers and facilitators relating to the services they are engaged in, we worked with our evaluation advisory team, the *E-Team*, to create and are now pilot testing the *Access and Barriers* interview tool, which is administered at intake and again at 6 and 12 months post intake.

With Support From:

SAMHSA CMHI Cooperative Agreement
(CMHS SM-08-004)

Vermont Dept. Of Mental Health
VT Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

Methods

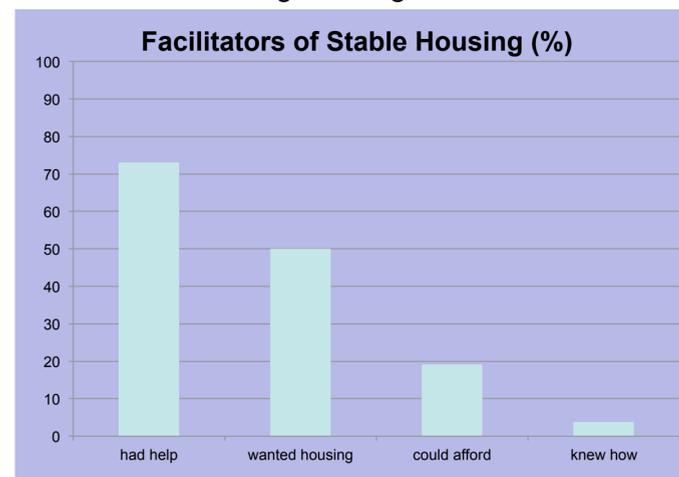
The tool is completed as a semi-structured interview, often with the young adult and interviewer filling it out together. It presents a series of statements, one for each barrier/facilitator topic, that the young adults responds to (e.g., the statement "*I have a driver's license*" is answered Yes or No).

Based on the answer a probe question is asked, and a series of follow up statements are listed and endorsed (or not) in order to identify specific facilitators (e.g., "*I could afford a car*") or barriers (e.g., "*I am not allowed to drive*"). Young adults may endorse as many statements as they need to. The tool takes approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Separate young adult and caregiver versions were developed; 30 young adults and 5 caregivers have completed the tool to date.

Housing

26 of 30 (87%) young adults indicated they had a stable housing situation. Lack of money was the main (n=4) barrier to stable housing, Key facilitators for having housing included:



Transportation

Transportation related issues are important for young adults entering the Vermont System of Care

- Of 16 young adults without either a license OR access to a car, the top barrier was cost (5).
- Only 11 (37%) reported having access to any form of public transportation.
- 11 (37%) had a drivers license, and were helped in getting one by:
 - All wanting/needing one
 - 8 knew how to obtain one
 - 2 were able to afford obtaining one/afford driving lessons

Services and Supports: Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Only 18 of 30 (60%) of interviewees reported receiving the mental health or related services they needed; of the 12 who did not 100% indicated "I do not want or need mental health and/or substance use services."

This is consistent with findings from other parts of the local and cross site evaluation findings, in which a large proportion of participants do not identify themselves as primarily having mental health or related problems.

Healthcare and Health Insurance

- 21 interviewees reporting having adequate access to healthcare services; 5 without access cited lack of money and 4 without access cited lack of knowledge as a main barrier.
- 24 (80%) had health insurance; among the uninsured several said they were in the process of applying for insurance, as well as citing lack of eligibility for insurance they could afford.

Education and Employment

Only 3 of 30 young adults reported NOT having current (or very recent) employment and/or educational involvement.

Key facilitators for educational involvement and/or employment were:

- Wanting or needing employment or educational involvement (22 of 27; 81%)
- Receiving support from an educational institution or program; this was a facilitator for both education and employment (14 of 27; 52%)

Conclusions

Preliminary results suggest the *Access and Barriers* survey may be an effective tool for identifying system of care and mental health care access issues.

- Only in relatively few interviews did respondents cite barriers and facilitating factors from outside those included as options in the *Survey*, suggesting the factors listed in the tool are sufficiently wide ranging.
- It is likely that some, or even many, of the barriers and facilitators from the interviews would not otherwise have come to the attention of people working in the system of care, or would have been identified so early in the young person's participation.

Limitations

- Relatively low sample size of young adults (n=30) and caregivers (n=5); no direct comparisons of their perspectives are possible yet.
- Currently have very little information about the impact of changed in *Access & Barriers* on young adults' experiences in the system of care over time.