

Comprehensive Mental Health Initiative

ORGANIZATION(S) PREPARING/SUBMITTING PROPOSAL: Rock County School Districts, Rock County Government, Family Services of Southern Wisconsin & Northern Illinois

Objectives:

This mental health initiative covers all members of our county dealing with increased stress and associated mental health concerns due to the loss of the General Motors plant, the local just in time suppliers and other local businesses and industries affected by the downturn in the economy. Each group involved in this initiative has provided a complete proposal included in the support materials. This document will provide an overview of all three projects.

Schools

- Build the capacity of student services staff within the educational system to respond to the increased substance use and mental health needs of students. Janesville and Beloit fall significantly short of meeting the Federal recommendations for the number of student services staff. Recent data, supported by anecdotal information, is showing an increased need for services to children and youth, likely as a result of the economic crisis in our community. The additional student services staff positions will:
 - Decrease Youth Substance Use: The 2009 Janesville Youth Survey revealed that the alcohol, tobacco and drug use increased in all youth ages and across substances as compared to the results of the 2007 Janesville Youth Survey. In addition, an emerging issue for both youth and adults is heroin use. There were 11 local deaths from heroin overdoses between March 2008 and April 2009. Four were youth between the ages of 18 to 20.
 - Improve the ability of children and youth to cope in a positive manner. Data regarding children's mental health conclude that twenty percent of youth taking the recent Search Survey reported frequent depression and/or at least one suicide attempt in the past year. Rock County Human Services Department records reveal an alarming trend in mental health detentions for youth under age 18 from 46 students in 2007 to 85 in 2009. Other emerging trends: increased student anxiety about meeting their basic needs; increased family stress due to separation of parents as they transfer to automobile plants out of state; increased numbers of homeless students and unaccompanied youth. More than 100 students were recently identified as homeless, living without a parent or guardian, in need of short term support to finish high school. Also noted was the increased number of students requesting free and reduced lunch.

Family Services

- Improve efficacy of economic support services for individuals by improving screening for mental health concerns.

This initiative is composed of three components: enhanced training for front line staff at shelters, food banks, and other economic support systems, access to a mental health assessment consultant, and additional training/support to minimize secondary stress/trauma among front line economic support service providers. Outcomes will be measured through client service satisfaction surveys.

- Economic Stress Counseling Intervention Initiative: Decrease prevalence of impaired functioning due to mental health issues attributable to economic stress.

Because of recent events, access to subsidized mental health services has become increasingly difficult. This initiative represents an effort to expand this resource by creating a funding pool to support mental health services to un/underinsured clients. Measurable outcomes for this initiative include reduction of presenting symptoms.

- Interpersonal Trauma Intervention Initiative: Decrease negative psychological impact of interpersonal trauma

Due to the convergence of a number of varied factors, unemployment appears to increase the incidence of domestic violence. At the same time, the absence of the economic means to pursue independence tends to delay efforts to break

free of the perpetrator and thus results in more prolonged exposure to physical and/or psychological trauma. The current domestic violence victim programs do not have sufficient mental health resources to address this concern. This initiative is intended to increase the availability of mental health services to this population.

- Economic Stress Counseling Intervention Initiative: Improve long-term individual outcomes.

Individuals who are seeking to resolve bankruptcy, mortgage foreclosure, and other significant debt issues frequently deal with mental health concerns such as elevated levels of anxiety and depression as well as significant relationship stressors. However, their efforts to address these significant economic issues are often sabotaged by these mental health issues. By including mental health professionals as part of the crisis financial counseling team, such individuals can be identified, engaged, and offer steps consistent with enhancing mental health so it can become part of the formal intervention process.

Rock County

- Eliminate the 7-month wait list to see a therapist, and reduce the recidivism within the jail population by 60 percent

Rock County will provide counseling services for mental health to lessen/eliminate waitlists and allow for people released from the County Jail to transition into treatment in the community. These services are essential for stability and decreasing recidivism of those with untreated mental illness and addictions. We currently estimate that 16% of our jail population or approximately 96 mentally ill inmates are in custody every day. Of this population, 75% meet the criteria for drug and/or alcohol abuse or dependence.

Progress to Date:

Schools

- Student services staff from the School Districts of Janesville and Beloit have met numerous times during the past year to discuss collaborative efforts.
- Numerous federal grant applications have been submitted.
- School Board members from all the districts throughout Rock County met to discuss the possibility of sharing resources.
- Homeless Liaisons from all school districts throughout Rock County met to discuss and develop a plan for sharing resources and coordinating efforts.
- The Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Abuse (ATODA) Coordinators from each Rock County school district meet monthly to share resources and knowledge about emerging trends and evidenced-based resources.

Family Services

- Access Initiative.
- Organizations that provide basic assistance have been identified.
- Economic Stress Counseling Intervention Initiative.
- Interpersonal Trauma Intervention Initiative
- Economic Stress Counseling Intervention Initiative

Recognition of the critical role of mental health for clients addressing financial crisis issues has long been noted. However, it has been difficult to find funding to fuse the two service disciplines.

Rock County

- The County implemented the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council in 2007 as a multi-disciplined approach to finding better ways to deal with jail overcrowding and diversionary treatment programs. Prior to 2009, no mental health services were available to inmates. In 2009, 20 hours/week of mental health services were programmed for the County Jail, which does not begin to meet the need.

Barriers:

Schools

- Escalating student needs with significant decreased resources. The School District of Janesville is losing 7 grant funded student services positions in the 2010 – 2011 school year.
- Early identification of families who are struggling. Many families currently experiencing struggles have not been accustomed to seeking assistance and therefore by the time they make their need known, they are in dire straits.

Family Services

- Access Initiative. -Implementation will likely be most dependent upon the endorsement of line staff within the various participating programs/services.
- Economic Stress Counseling Intervention Initiative & Interpersonal Trauma Intervention Initiative - There are some logistical challenges in sharing staff across agencies.
- Economic Stress Counseling Intervention Initiative - There are some program service/logistical redesigns associated with adding a mental health component.

Rock County

- **Rock County** Economic constraints of state imposed levy limits and local economic conditions limit the local ability to respond to the need. Most mentally ill substance abusers are without jobs and insurance. Thus, their issues go untreated, and their anti-social or criminal actions put them in the criminal justice system and eventually the jail.

Where federal agencies can help/what type of partnership would help:

Schools & Family Services –

Funding to get us through the crisis period of high unemployment and financial stress in Rock County. Funding is the obvious type of help needed; we are interested in whether these initiatives might represent--or could be developed --into an innovative practice model for replication.

Rock County –

Changes in state and federal health insurance may help, but it may take several years to reach “street level” assistance. Furthermore, local economic conditions are straining the current safety net. Immediate assistance could be provided through a short-term demonstration grant or grant assistance program to hire three masters-degree-trained mental health therapists. Factors that reduce the need two to three years from now include local economic recovery, reduced recidivism, and less demand for public services due to improved mental health insurance coverage. By year four, the staffing would be reduced to one therapist paid through the County budget.

Budget: Next 2 pages