Division of Services Improvement, Clinical Technical Assistance Project
Technology Assisted Care

Meta House Introductory Call Summary Notes
October 18, 2013, 10:00 a.m. ET

Submitted to: Meta House
Date of Submission: October 21, 2013

Attendees
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): Dina Passman
Meta House (MH): Andrea Jehly and Christine Ullstrup
JBS International (JBS): Dave Wanser, Iris Chai, and Leslie McElligott
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Meeting Purpose

- The purpose of the call is to make general introductions between SAMHSA Government Project Officer (GPO), Dina Passman, members of the MH TAC grant project, and the technical assistance contractors at JBS International. SAMHSA and JBS are committed to MH's success and would like to assess how they can assist MH with its program implementation needs.

- Dina affirmed the roles of SAMHSA and JBS in supporting MH throughout the life of their grant. MH should feel free to contact Dina and/or SAMHSA's Grants Management team (Alania Foster) whenever questions arise.

Grantee Progress

- MH serves provides substance abuse treatment and recovery services to low-income, high-risk women with co-occurring physical and/or mental health issues. Over time, MH staff have noticed that client's interest, comfort, and access to technology, like Smartphones, has shifted, particularly among younger women. The use of texting and mobile application features are especially useful tools to assist with long-term recovery and retention for the younger population.

- Client care is coordinated by a multidisciplinary team. Ensuring effective communication across teams is of critical importance.

- MH utilizes recovery coaches to provide technical outreach to clients.

Electronic Health Records (EHR)

- Thus far, implementation of the EHR system has gone smoothly. MH began piloting the EHR with out-patient counselors so that project staff could address bugs and establish procedures for using the system. Residential treatment staff will be trained next.

- MH has dedicated staff (a technical assistant for counselors and a medical records administrative assistant) to provide support to counselors as they learn to navigate the EHR system. Generally speaking, staff are not resistant to using technology, but there are varying degrees of familiarity with technology. They appreciate the EHR's added efficiency and other benefits related to coordinating communication.

- MH's information systems manager retired suddenly. While they search for a replacement, other staff have stepped in to keep things running. Fortunately, many large tasks, like ordering equipment, were taken care of in advance.

- MH will use the hosted version of EHR, as per the recommendation of their former IT manager.

- An external consultant advised MH to purchase new HIPAA compliant software and upgraded computers and monitors for the agency. This is an unexpected but necessary change that will help staff use the EHR system more effectively.

- MH completed vendor-led EHR training. The vendor used a train-the-trainer approach and identified "super-users" to assist with implementation and training of other staff. MH may pursue additional vendor trainings in the future around specific topics and/or as need arises.

Mobile Applications

- MH staff provide clients with technical support around identifying and installing mobile applications on their phones. MH may need assistance related to client data plans, and will think through this request in more detail.

- The Ideas Exchange has a number of resources dedicated to free mobile applications. Andrea Jehly (MH) has found them to be helpful.

- Finding mobile applications to address issues besides substance abuse may be helpful. Dave Wanser (JBS) suggested that clients may also be interested in developing life skills related to fitness, nutrition, resume building, and dealing with relationships, among other topics.

- It is often challenging to find mobile applications that have a meaningful influence on client outcomes. Dina said that SAMHSA is interested in finding out about applications that are working. This could be a presentation topic for a future Biweekly TAC Grantee Call. Andrea said that MH would be happy to share their findings.

Text Messaging

- The EHR has the capability to send text message reminders. This function will be implemented shortly. MH would like to determine the frequency and type of messages that would be most appropriate and effective for clients in out-patient settings (e.g., appointment reminders about 1:1 and individual services).

- Dave mentioned that several grantees text motivational messages to their clients.

Data Collection

- Dave reported that data collection is an important way to demonstrate the value of technology. SAMHSA wants to build a compelling case for technology's role in enhancing behavioral health care. The TAC Evaluation Workgroup is tasked with developing meaningful questions that can be asked across site (in absence of a cross-site evaluation) to address technology's impact on treatment outcomes and recovery.

- MH's evaluation focuses on capturing health outcomes. Technology-specific items are more process-oriented. Their external evaluator is interested in determining how the program is implemented (i.e., how the program was rolled out, how many people are using technology, what types of technology are being used, etc.).

- There is also a qualitative component of MH's data collection plan that will use focus groups and 1:1 interviews to assess client's overall experience.

- Dave recommended adding client comfort with and access to technology as part of the information collected at intake.

- MH plans to include an item on the EHR treatment plan to assess how clients are using mobile applications as part of their treatment.

- Counselors should also actively track clients' use of technology as a part of the treatment plan to build the case for technology's role in improving client outcomes. This will help to identify program champions as well as those who might need additional support (across counselors and clients). The EHR should be able to generate reports on this information.

Other

- MH staff have been granted access to the Ideas Exchange and have explored the site.

- MH is considering providing limited-use cell phones to clients in residential treatment to be used when they receive external services. Project staff will train the transportation team on protocols and will program specific numbers into the phones.

- MH has not experienced any issues related to the draw-down of project funds.

Opportunities for Assistance

- Dina affirmed her intent to make the implementation process operate as smoothly as possible for new grantees. Dave mentioned that the JBS Technical Assistance team has a lot of exposure with other grantees' use of telehealth technology and wants to help organizations institutionalize technology to support future programming.

- MH is interested in setting up a public access computer lab for clients to use while onsite. They would like to know what other grantees have done to make this happen. The Discussion Board on the Ideas Exchange is one way to share questions and find out about fellow grantee experiences.

Conclusion

- Dina and the JBS team are available to assist and look forward to working with MH.