



I appreciate the opportunity to submit input to DPH's health resource planning efforts. I am specifically responding to the Behavioral Health Services questions for the 2014 informational survey.

The VNA and Hospice of Greater Milford has been providing skilled mental health nursing services to psychiatrically disabled persons in southern Worcester County since 1982. This program is staffed with nurses with extensive psychiatric training and work experience. The patients have chronic mental illness diagnoses and required intermittent skilled nursing care in order to remain in their current living situation.

1. How do you anticipate health resource planning for Behavioral Health to help you in your work? How do you expect to use the information resulting from the effort?

Response to Question 1:

Home health care for person's with chronic mental illness seems to be under-utilized. It is hoped that this process will recognize the role and utility of the primary prevention aspects that home health services can provide. (Please refer to comments below.)

2. Are there specific services within Mental Health & Substance Abuse that you would like to see studied, and were not already included in the list of services on page 6? Please describe with as much specificity as possible. Please indicate how they can be addressed through health resource planning.

Response to Question 2:

Home health care agencies with established professional mental health nursing services should be studied in greater detail.

3. Given the importance of prevention and also "post-acute" services for mental health & substance abuse, what critical evidence-based services & programs are available, should be expanded, or need to be developed? Are there specific models you suggest we study?

Response to Question 3:

The anecdotal experience of the VNA and Hospice of Greater Milford is that the mental health patients have a low hospitalization rate. By providing cost effective home based mental health nursing visits allows this agency the opportunity to observe and respond quickly to patients who may start to experience symptom exacerbation. The nurses can then develop intervention strategies with the physician or psychiatrist and divert patients from stressful hospitalizations.

The mental health nurses function independently in the patient's home situation and addressed the co-morbid conditions that are frequently found including high risk activities such as medication non-compliance, smoking, and diet adherence. Frequently it the co-morbid condition that is the jeopardizing factor for the patient's ability to remain in the community.

*VNA and Hospice of Greater Milford became part of The SALMON Health and Retirement family in 2012.*

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The VNA and Hospice of Greater Milford recommends that home health effectiveness for the chronically mentally ill patient be studied for its cost effectiveness as an intervention modality and for its effectiveness for preventing hospitalization.

There appears to be a need for greater responsiveness from the larger mental health providers, both state and community based agencies to work collaboratively with home health agencies. Frequently, these patients are just managing in their “home” environment. The goal would be to see these patient thrive not just barely survive.

The competing issues of too many clients and too few resources play a role in these borderline success stories.

The VNA and Hospice of Greater recommends that a collaborative model between home health agencies with mental health programs, state agencies and other community based agencies should be reevaluated and redesigned .

4. Obtaining capacity, workload/volume, and demand data for outpatient & community mental health & substance abuse services is a challenge. Do you have ideas for data sources or suggestions for collecting data now or in the future? Are there specific “data gaps” that you feel are important for future data collection?

Response to Question 4:

No specific response at this time, but would welcome the opportunity to provide suggestions in the future if asked.

Thank you again for this opportunity to respond to the 2014 informational survey.

Sincerely,

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Mental Health and Medical Social Services Manager

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