

San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health Placement After Stabilization Program

Overview

The Placement After Stabilization (PAS) program provides discharge planning for people exiting crisis residential treatment (CRT) through collaboration with facility staff, the San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) programs, and external agencies.

Challenge

In addressing the unique behavioral health needs of San Bernardino County residents and continuing efforts of reducing recidivism into higher levels of care, one of the most crucial aspects of ensuring ongoing stability in one's health is the coordination of care between the different levels of treatment. Historically, agencies have experienced challenges in determining and securing placement options for persons leaving CRT facilities. Increased focus at the state level on timely access of care further highlighted the need to improve coordination between behavioral health programs.

DBH began to work towards developing an appropriate program to fill this gap, understanding that the program would need to foster interagency coordination with a unique knowledge of, as well as direct contacts within, the county's behavioral health continuum of care. Ultimately, the PAS program would provide the solution.

Solution

PAS program staff understood that part of the solution involved starting the discharge process upon a person's admission. Therefore, staff begins building rapport and identifying appropriate aftercare services on day one. PAS program clinicians attend treatment team meetings alongside CRT staff, working to develop a discharge and placement plan for the client over the next several weeks, contacting resources and establishing linkages that the client can utilize upon discharge. These resources/linkages can include outpatient treatment, alcohol and drug services, and contact with other county and community programs to arrange for residential placement or any other needs.

PAS program clinicians also maintain consistent communication with local hospitals and their emergency departments, as well as local law enforcement agencies and county and community partners, to provide informed alternative destinations for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. This contact is key to allow the

transition of care for individuals whose acuity or symptomology deem them in need of voluntary or involuntary inpatient treatment.

The PAS program partners with the San Bernardino County Probation, Sheriff's Departments, San Bernardino County Department of Aging and Adult Services/Office of the Public Guardian, and other DBH full service partnerships and outpatient programs.

Innovation

San Bernardino County's implementation of the unique PAS program, which incorporates County behavioral health staff into crisis residential treatment facilities to provide discharge planning upon one's admission, has demonstrated a successful and intensive collaboration between County and community partners, at the benefit of those most in need. This collaboration also facilitates smoother and timelier transitions into alternative, least-restrictive levels of care for those in crisis with PAS staff best equipped to utilize their extensive network of internal and external agencies to locate proper placement facilities.

Finally, this program demonstrates key components of DBH's mission to be a progressive system of seamless, accessible, and effective services that promote recovery and resiliency for individuals, families, and communities. The transition from crisis residential treatment to the next level of care, whether higher or lower, promotes ongoing recovery and optimum wellness in the individuals served through the PAS program.

Results

In Fiscal Year 2018/2019, **94.7 percent** of the people served in San Bernardino County CRT facilities were successfully diverted from unnecessary psychiatric hospitalization through the structured treatment environment provided by the CRT in collaboration with the PAS program. While PAS program clinicians engage and provide discharge planning for every person admitted into a CRT facility, of the individuals who completed the program and required alternative placement options, PAS was directly responsible for **70 percent** of successful discharges.

Replicability

The PAS program can be replicated with funding and the willingness to develop a strong partnership with local county and community agencies. The Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) provides ongoing funding for staffing and associated costs at a cost of approximately \$790,371 annually.