

Connecticut Office of Rural Health

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Annual Report - December 2017

2016-2017 Year in Review

This annual report highlights the CT Office of Rural Health's (CT-ORH) 2016-17 funded initiatives and activities. More detailed information about the particular initiatives is provided upon request by contacting the CT-ORH.

Funded Initiatives

This year the funded initiatives had two primary areas of focus, Mental/Behavioral Health and Emergency Medical Services training.

Community Health Center Association of Connecticut, Inc. (CHCACT) is a not-for-profit statewide association of sixteen Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). CHCACT exists to assist the FQHCs to provide access to the highest quality health care and social services for Connecticut's underserved populations. CHCACT received a sub-award for de-escalation training using a three-pronged approach.

Opioid addiction is an epidemic plaguing Connecticut and the nation. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) identified this as one of their top priorities. HHS has dedicated resources to address and reduce drug addiction and overdose deaths. Connecticut has put measures in place to monitor and control opioid prescribing practices. The implementation of these stricter policies has led some individuals with substance misuse and abuse disorders to health centers in search of opioids. FQHCs have witnessed aggressive, disruptive and threatening behaviors in some individuals when opioids are not prescribed. Through emergency response drills, FQHCs identified a need for de-escalation training to effectively manage these situations and engage the patient in appropriate treatment.

CHCACT worked in collaboration with the Connecticut's Women's Consortium to design, coordinate and facilitate four half-day de-escalation trainings. The trainings were held at the Community Health and Wellness Center in Torrington and United Community and Family Services Center in Norwich. Fifty-three staff members from various disciplines attended the trainings. Participants learned about the pathology of addiction, the connections between addiction and trauma, the effects of trauma on the



Mary Winar, Manager

FUNDING

Projects and initiatives from the CT Office of Rural Health (CT-ORH) are funded through the Department of Health and Human Services through the Health Resources & Services Administration's Federal Office of Rural Health Policy grant program, CFDA #93.913. The grant is awarded to Northwestern CT Community College to maintain the CT-ORH. Projects must be consistent with the CT-ORH's mission to support the planning, enhancement, education or evaluation of rural health care programs.

brain, and the relations between anger/aggression, trauma and addiction. Participants also learned of therapeutic trauma-informed interventions for addressing behavioral escalation. Evaluations were very favorable and participants overwhelmingly found the trainings to be useful and applicable to their work.

CHCACT contracted with Management of Aggressive Behaviors (MOAB) for the second and third components of this funded initiative. A CHCACT staff member received a certificate in de-escalation training after attending a one-day Instructor's Course. She will be available to provide on-site training with specific content to meet the needs of the FQHCs. CHCACT also purchased a one-year membership to MOAB's on-line de-escalation training. This on-line module will be available as a basic de-escalation introduction or refresher course for new staff or those who were unable to attend the in person trainings. Having all aspects of this training initiative available to FQHC staff statewide, greatly expands the impact and enhances the sustainability of the program.

Hope Payson, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor, received a sub-award to increase community awareness about trauma and addiction. Hope's experience is extensive with over 20 years working in community mental health, and specializing in the treatment of addiction and trauma.

Northwestern CT Community College (NCCC) and Salisbury Congregational Church were the locations for the two half- day sessions, "*Uprooting Addiction, Planting the Seeds of Recovery: Exploring the factors that hold Substance and Behavioral Addictions in place*". Participants learned about the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study and the association between childhood trauma and addiction. Hope's presentation also included: How oppression, stigma and exposure to recent traumatic events increase vulnerability to addiction and compulsions; What strengths one taps into to seed a sustainable recovery and How to provide a compassionate community response.

Another component of the workshop included panelists with histories of trauma, addiction and recovery. In total 65 attendees listened intently and interacted with the seven individuals as they shared their stories and experiences.

The captivated audiences included members from Charlotte Hungerford Hospital, CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Mental/Behavioral and Addiction Services Agencies, Clinicians, Therapists, Home Care Agencies, various social services agencies, people in recovery, the general public and those who have lost loved ones to addiction. Psychologists, Social Workers, Licensed Professional Counselors and Licensed Mental Health Counselors in attendance received CEUs.

At the conclusion of the workshops, many participants stayed and engaged in conversations with the presenter, panelists and each other. Evaluations indicated a great need and interest in further workshops. Areas of interest included how to implement the ACE study questionnaire in public and private health care settings, creating a specific training for local physicians regarding persons at risk for addiction and ways to manage pain without prescribing medications that lead to addiction.

Production is underway for a documentary *Recovering Community* with an anticipated release early in 2018. The film features the program panelist and captures their heartfelt stories and experiences in overcoming obstacles and challenges in their journey to recovery from trauma and addiction. To learn more see <http://recoveringcommunitymovie.com/> .

Another mental and behavioral health resource in Litchfield County is **Greenwoods Counseling Referrals, Inc.**, (GCR). This non-profit organization offers free mental health assessments to residents in Litchfield County. After completing an assessment, GCR provides the client with a minimum of three referrals to mental health providers in the area. The client is then matched up to providers based on clinical needs, clinician expertise, insurance coverage and location. GCR offers a subsidy to clients who are unable to afford their treatment. GCR also offers networking opportunities, continuing education trainings, and various other support to its provider network members.

GCR has experienced an increase in the number of referrals from individuals seeking treatment and counseling for trauma related events and substance misuse disorders. This is also a common experience noted by other behavioral and mental health clinicians and provider organizations.

The CT-ORH awarded funds to GCR to develop an educational program for physicians and other medical professionals licensed to prescribe medications. Having access to relevant available resources and tools ensures individuals receive the best possible mental/behavioral health care. In consideration of the schedules and time constraints of this targeted provider group, it was decided the best vehicle to present the education was in a DVD format. GCR worked in collaboration with RC productions and the Litchfield County Opiate Task Force to create this DVD.

The subject content has three distinct areas of focus. The first section focuses on bringing awareness to the association between trauma and addiction. This section includes education on assessment measures to help identify patients with a history of trauma.

The second component of the DVD addresses how to recognize individuals with the potential to develop a substance use disorder. This section also includes techniques that can be implemented to assist with managing challenging and emotional reactions from patients.

The last section of the DVD shares area resources for treatment of mental health and/or substance abuse disorders. Providing Physicians and other health care professionals with this educational DVD ensures access to accurate, evidence-based research findings to make informed, appropriate prescribing decisions to best meet the needs of their patients.

Creating this educational DVD was a successful, collaborative team effort to address and find solutions to an identified health care need for a vulnerable population. To receive a copy of the DVD please contact the CT Office of Rural Health.

The CT Screening Brief Intervention Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) Health Professions Training Program is housed at the Department of Community Medicine and Health Care at UConn Health. A federal grant funds the training program. SBIRT is an evidence-based approach to provide early intervention services in health care settings to reduce at-risk, tobacco, alcohol and other psychoactive substance use in patients. The purpose of the program is to infuse SBIRT curricula and training across UConn's undergraduate medical, dental, nursing and pharmacy disciplines as well as in dental hygiene and medical assisting curricula at state-affiliated community colleges. The training program's geographic distribution is statewide and is implemented in all areas where students practice and provide services at clinical rotation sites. These sites include affiliated hospitals, community health centers, rural, urban and suburban private practices.

Funding from a CT-ORH sub-award assisted in developing a new inter-professional SBIRT training module. The new module is an avenue for health professional students to engage in inter-professional collaboration and to effectively work as a team to target and manage substance misuse in their patients. A standardized patient script was developed with a focus on marijuana misuse in an older patient. It

will be used in simulation exercises with inter-professional groups of students. Marijuana use has increased by over 50 % among 50 to 64 year olds and by 250 % for those over 65 years of age. The marijuana misuse case will be used in conjunction with two additional case scenarios; alcohol and opioid misuse cases.

The simulated educational tool enhances the preparation of future health care professionals to care for patients at risk for substance misuse disorders.

EMS Initiatives

Richard Shok, a University of Connecticut School of Nursing graduate recognized a need for CPR training in the university and local communities. In 2007, he founded **Code One Training Solutions, LLC**. Later in 2009, he launched a community-training center. Presently Code One, operates six facilities and two mobile training vehicles in four east coast states. Code One staff travel nationwide educating members of small businesses and large corporations in lifesaving techniques.

Continuing education is provided to first responders through Code One's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Training Center. A specially-trained team of EMS professionals provide training in Tactical Emergency Casualty Care.

The CT Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) identified an on-going need to offer basic and advanced level SMART Triage training to rural EMS providers. Over a period of three years, the CT-ORH funded several SMART Triage Trainings throughout the state. During the 2016-17 grant period, the CT-ORH provided Code One with funding to conduct both levels of SMART Triage training. The trainings tailored to meet the needs of the targeted audiences, included a review of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), SMART Triage and rapid patient assessment.

Two "Incident Management Active Assailant" trainings were held in Northwest CT for rural EMS providers. The 8-hour training incorporated both the basic and advanced levels of SMART Triage. Time was allotted for attendees to network and practice bandaging and tourniquet application skills. Thirty-three EMS providers attended the trainings.

These life-saving skills will assist town officials and service providers in reviewing their operational plans in preparation for emergency events.

Eastern CT EMS Council Inc. also received a sub-award for SMART triage training. American Professional Education Services held two SMART Triage refresher trainings. Thirty-two EMS providers representing the towns of Franklin, Lebanon, Preston, Norwich, Lisbon, Voluntown, Canterbury, Thompson and Sterling attended the trainings at American Ambulance Service in Norwich.

Another provision of the funding allowed for the purchase of various SMART Triage training supplies. The Eastern Connecticut EMS Council Public Information & Education Committee organizes and offers SMART triage training in the region in partnership with the State Office of Emergency Medical Services, the State Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, and the Emergency Support Function 8 (ESF-8) Group. The ESF-8 receives funding through the Federal Government to conduct training and exercises. The training supplies will assist with facilitating coordinated and collaborative emergency exercises/drills in preparing rural towns to respond to various types of emergency events.

Awards and Recognitions

Community Health and Wellness Center of Greater Torrington, Inc., Generations Family Health Center, Inc., and United Community Services, Inc. are the CT-ORH designated rural Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC). Each health center received 2017 HRSA Quality Grant Awards.

Community Health and Wellness excelled in five of the eight categories: Clinical Quality Improvers, Health Center Quality Leaders Enhancing Access to Care, Achieving PCMH Recognition and the most outstanding recognition, National Quality Leader. The Community Health and Wellness is the only CT Community Health Center to receive an award in this category. This category is awarded to those health centers that have exceeded national clinical quality benchmarks, including Healthy People 2020 goals, for chronic disease management, preventative care and perinatal care.

Generations Family Health Center was awarded for EHR Reporters, Clinical Quality Improvers and Achieving PCMH Recognition. United Community Services award was for the categories of EHR Reporter, Clinical Quality Improvers, Enhancing Access to Care, Addressing Health Disparities and Achieving PCMH Recognition.

Congratulations to the awarding winning FQHCs for their deserving recognitions and grants. Thank you for being an essential and integral part of the health care delivery system in providing accessible, affordable, quality health care for the rural and underserved residents in the state.

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