



BPS Insights

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National Benchmarking Initiative for Addiction Treatment Rolls Out

As previously reported, BPS is partnering with the State Associations of Addiction Providers (SAAS) and NIATx in launching a national benchmarking initiative for addiction providers. An "early-bird" membership campaign is now in full swing. A specially discounted rate of just \$900 for an annual subscription is available until June 30. Volunteers to serve on the Steering Committee are also being sought. Please [click here](#) to obtain a brochure and participation form.

The combined resources of BPS, SAAS and NIATx promise to make this an important event in the field of community-based addiction treatment. Feature articles about this initiative appear in the current issues of Behavioral Healthcare Magazine (April) and Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Weekly (May 4) and can be consulted for further details.

Improving Access to Services

A state-wide process benchmarking exercise is showing promise in stimulating improved access to behavioral health services (defined as number of calendar days between request for service and first scheduled appointment). Process benchmarking is a unique investigative method developed by BPS that uses benchmarking data to identify potential best practices. A process benchmarking exercise focusing on access to services was conducted last summer in a Midwestern state with approximately 50 participating community-based behavioral health organizations. The technique successfully identified a number of organizational practices that distinguished agencies with prompt access to services from the others. These practices were regarded as potential best practices. They include the following:

- Setting aside blocks of time for intakes on a "first come-first served" basis without appointments
- Limiting clinicians' computer access to their appointment schedules to "view only"
- Adding outpatient staffing hours when access becomes problematic
- Providing clinicians with computer access to their appointment schedules
- Reserving certain hours on the schedule for intakes
- Putting incentives in place for therapists or others to provide timely access to routine outpatient services
- Conducting formal performance improvement activities to bring about more timely access to routine outpatient counseling services
- Having an "intake team" or equivalent
- Providing schedulers with specific training about the importance of and methods of providing prompt access
- Avoiding the use of voicemail in the intake process 95% of the time

- Attempting to improve access by searching the literature or contacting other organizations for ideas
- Avoiding setting limits on the number of intakes that a therapist may be asked to see in a given day

Recently, a follow-up survey was conducted to determine the impact of implementing one or more of those potential best practices. It was found that the median access figure declined from 18 days to 11 days, an improvement of 39%. These findings are very encouraging in suggesting that a two hour process benchmarking workshop can lead to broad-scale improvement among multiple behavioral health organizations.

Upcoming Events

On May 19, Paul Lefkovitz will conduct a process benchmarking workshop at the spring conference of the Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards in Kalamazoo. The topic will be "Favorable Change in Employment". Behavioral Pathway Systems will also be an exhibitor at the conference.

Contact Us!

We want to create an active and vibrant community of individuals and organizations interested in benchmarking, performance management, and outcomes. If you have thoughts, ideas, suggestions, tips, or questions, we'd like to hear from you. Please feel free to contact us at info@bpsys.org.