

June 2012

Fact Sheet on Designing and Implementing Evidence-based Practices (EBPs): The SBHA Role¹

SBHAs play a major system-wide role in designing and implementing evidence-based prevention, treatment and recovery-oriented practices that produce positive clinical outcomes for consumers and savings for taxpayers. Leadership in disseminating knowledge of EBPs to system partners is one key component of the SBHA's role as a change agent. SBHAs facilitate education and learning about science and empirical evidence related to clinical services and their connection to improving behavioral health client outcomes.

Significant advances have been made in the understanding and treatment of mental illness. Despite these advances, experts believe that many Americans are not benefiting from improved behavioral health care. The lag between discovering effective forms of treatment and incorporating them into routine patient care is long, lasting on average about 15 years.

Use of evidence-based practices can be affected by coverage decisions. Payers can be reluctant to cover new treatment modalities, even when there is evidence for their effectiveness, possibly because the new modalities are not yet considered to be mainstream or may be more expensive. Second, providers are often not trained in the newly discovered evidence-based practices. Research findings are not disseminated in a manner that enables providers to easily incorporate them in their practice.

Despite barriers, SBHAs have been driving dramatic changes in clinical practice and EBP reforms through regulatory and policy changes that have spurred widespread change with service delivery systems. EBP reforms have come about because SBHAs also have explicitly and extensively focused on both the organization and financing of care and the content and quality of direct clinical care simultaneously.

Many SBHAs are using limited resources to sponsor conferences to reach many people about the use of EBPs. They are at the forefront of facilitating education and learning about science and empirical evidence related to clinical services and its connection to patient outcomes. SBHAs have been engaging providers in an open dialog about ideas for transformation with EBP reforms front and center. SBHAs work closely with academia in their states to accelerate the movement of research findings into practice, and establishing "centers of excellence" to train providers.

¹ SBHAs are state substance abuse and mental health authorities, and the term *behavioral health* refers to substance abuse and mental health.