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Fact Sheet on Measuring and Encouraging Improved Behavioral Health Performance and Outcomes: The SBHA Role¹

SBHAs have developed cutting-edge systems and programs that health plans use to collect, analyze and aggregate data on behavioral health provider practices, and feed this information back to providers so they can understand how well they meet standards of care for clients. The result of these efforts has been particularly important for plans to use the data to identify and intervene with those providers whose practices represent outliers in terms of quality. In addition, these initiatives identify individuals at risk of adverse health outcomes and higher utilization of services because of substandard care.

The creation of a National Behavioral Health Quality Framework by SAMHSA represents an important step in achieving the overarching purpose of SAMHSA to "realizing an integrated data strategy and a national framework for quality improvement in behavioral health care that will inform policy, measure program impact, and lead to improved quality of services and outcomes for individuals, families, and communities."

As improving the quality of behavioral health care is a primary aim, SBHAs have begun to develop state-specific quality strategies to help meet the priorities of the National Quality Strategy. SBHAs have begun to streamline the many behavioral health metrics into a single streamlined measure set.

SBHAs also are working with Medicaid, Medicare and other private payers to analyze information collected from quality data measurement systems to improve behavioral health quality.

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is identifying areas in which gaps exist in behavioral health quality measurement reporting. AHRQ will make recommendations about which existing quality measures need improvement, updating, or expansion, ensuring that these recommendations are consistent with the National Quality Strategy. AHRQ will also award grants to entities for purposes of developing, improving, updating, or expanding quality measures. SBHAs are collaborating with behavioral health providers to apply for AHRQ grants to develop new innovative behavioral health quality measures.

As states braid current and future funding streams and methodologies, SBHAs have been working with partners and stakeholders –including representatives of diverse ethnic, racial and sexual minority populations – to incorporate behavioral health into the design, implementation and use of electronic health records (EHRs).

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

In addition, SBHAs have developed a set of quality and performance indicators identified to improve outcomes and accountability, while eliminating redundancy and burden in reporting.

To achieve optimum individualized care, a modern behavioral health system should include a structure in which all holistic outcomes, measures and indicators of care are collected, stored and shared with the individual and all of those providers who are associated with care of the individual. To that end, SBHAs support and participate in the development of interoperable, integrated electronic health records that will be necessary, as will community-wide indicators of behavioral health disorders.

SBHAs support a framework that contains several performance measures (some with multiple parts) and balanced across structure, process, and outcomes, as well as across behavioral health conditions. The measures could be applied to any health care setting. There are complexities associated with the delivery of behavioral health treatments that point to the need for careful stewardship to achieve a consensus on what quality domains are most important to measure, and to coordinate studies aimed at gathering evidence to build a more robust portfolio of measures. Other than SBHAs, no entity at the state level is now providing leadership to help gain consensus for the development of behavioral health measures.

SBHAs have undertaken many initiatives to make information about recovery, self-help services, and data on services available to consumers, family members, and advocates via the Internet and other means including:

- Information about self-help services, education, and supports to consumers and family members;
- Information about identifying behavioral health conditions;
- Information about behavioral health care treatments;
- Information about EBPs;
- Information about outcomes of SBHA providers;
- Information about specific recovery initiatives by SBHAs; and
- Performance measures on SBHA providers.