

Mental Health Services Act

Fundamental Concepts



Community collaboration: the process by which various stakeholders, including groups of individuals or families, citizens, agencies, organizations, and businesses work together to share information and resources in order to accomplish a shared vision. Collaboration allows for shared leadership, decisions, ownership, vision, and responsibility. The goal of community collaboration is to bring members of the community together in an atmosphere of support to systematically solve existing and emerging problems that could not easily be solved by one group alone.

Cultural competence: a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among consumer providers, family member providers, and professionals that enables that system, agency or those professionals, consumer providers, and family member providers to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. Cultural competence includes language competence and views cultural and language competent programs and services as methods for elimination of racial and ethnic mental health disparities.

Client and family driven: Adult clients and families of children and youth identify their needs and preferences which lead to the services and supports that will be most effective for them. Their needs and preferences drive the policy and financing decisions that affect them. Adult services are client-centered and child and youth services are family driven; with providers working in full partnership with the clients and families they serve to develop individualized, comprehensive service plans.

Wellness focus, which includes the concepts of recovery and resilience: Recovery refers to the process in which people who are diagnosed with a mental illness are able to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities. For some individuals, recovery means recovering certain aspects of their lives and the ability to live a fulfilling and productive life despite a disability. For others, recovery implies the reduction or elimination of symptoms. Focusing on recovery in service planning encourages and supports hope. Resilience refers to the personal qualities of optimism and hope, and the personal traits of good problem solving skills that lead individuals to live, work and learn with a sense of mastery and competence.

Integrated service experiences for clients and their families throughout their interactions with the mental health system: This means that services are “seamless” to clients and that clients do not have to negotiate multiple agencies and funding sources to get critical needs met and to move towards recovery and develop resiliency. Services are delivered, or at a minimum, coordinated through a single agency or a system of care. The integrated service experience centers on the individual/family, uses a strength-based approach, and includes multi-agency programs and joint planning to best address the individual/family’s needs using the full range of community-based treatment, case management, and interagency system components required by children/transition age youth/adults/older adults. Integrated service experiences include attention to people of all ages who have a mental illness and who also have co-occurring disorders, including substance use problems and other chronic health conditions or disabilities. With a full range of integrated services to treat the whole person, the goals of self-sufficiency for older adults and adults and safe family living for children and youth can be reached for those who may have otherwise faced homelessness, frequent and avoidable emergency medical care or hospitalization, incarceration, out-of-home placement, or dependence on the state for years to come.