

Primary and Behavioral Health Care Integration Grant
SAMHSA
Heritage Behavioral Health Center
Grant Recipient, beginning October 2010

Heritage Behavioral Health Center (Heritage) is focusing the PBHCI project on adults who have a serious and persistent mental illness (SPMI) and are on antipsychotic or psychotropic medication with or without a co-occurring substance abuse disorder. They are identified as either at risk of or having a co-occurring medical condition(s).

The purpose of the project is to implement the Medical Home concept, guided by Barbara Mauer's Person-Centered Healthcare Home model for adults with serious mental illnesses and significant physical health care needs, providing integrated behavioral and primary health care to improve the overall wellness and physical health of individuals with serious mental illness. By providing holistic services, we are realizing improved access to primary care, improved prevention, early identification, and intervention to avoid serious health issues. Heritage is collaborating with the Community Health Improvement Center (CHIC), a federally-qualified health center to provide primary care for PBHCI participants at Heritage. They are the community's major resource providing primary care for the underserved population. We have an on-going collaborative administrative meeting to address programmatic issues, new services, and future integration. For the past 5 years, a team of medical and executive staff from both Heritage and CHIC has attended the annual conferences of the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare which has offered sessions about integration of primary care and mental health services.

Since mid February 2011, we have made excellent progress toward our goals. We have hired all necessary personnel and have all contracts in place with CHIC and with the evaluator (TriWest Group). We are admitting a steady stream of clients into the program. We have admitted sixty consumers into the program, and have successfully tested our client-level data collection and data entry protocols. We also have pilot-tested and refined many of our new health and wellness activities.

We are currently offering twelve health and wellness group activities per week which include: food education and shopping, cooking, chair exercises, walking groups, healthy eating groups, yoga, and zumba. On July 1st, we will be offering diabetes and hypertension education twice per month. The Health and Wellness Coach has become certified in smoking cessation, and will be starting classes this month. We have purchased the carbon monoxide meter and are testing clients as they come into the program. This provides a great visual aid for the clients and staff so they see the level of carbon monoxide in the client's lungs as a result of smoking. This visual aid will also show the client their health improvement as their lungs clear. We are working with Heritage's on-site pharmacy (Genoa) and Medicaid to identify what nicotine replacement therapies Medicaid will pay for, and how long they will pay. The Health and Wellness Coach is also becoming certified in group exercise and personal training within the next

two weeks. She was just recently certified in yoga. Each week we take two exercise classes out into the various communities where clients live.

Thus far, we have built a medical exam room and co-located a physician assistant who is working 8 hours per week in the primary care clinic at Heritage. We will be expanding this to 20 hours per week in the very near future to accommodate the increase demand to 20 hours as the need arises.

Several clients admitted to the program have had untreated conditions requiring referrals to cardiologists, podiatrists, neurologists, and gynecologists. Clients have lost from three pounds to twenty-five pounds in the 3 ½ months of operation. Two partially immobile clients are now mobile. Fifty-two percent of the clients are participating in at least one health and wellness activity with the average participating in at least three times per week. The majority of clients actively participating in the program report being much more aware of the benefits of healthy eating and exercise, and report the benefits of seeing a doctor/physician assistant in a place where they are comfortable and get support of the care managers, as well as their behavioral health case managers and psychiatrists.

While we are seeing many benefits to the program, we have identified the following obstacles: 1) accessing current or past diagnostic test results ordered by any physician; 2) transporting client records from CHIC for clients seen by the CHIC physician assistant (PA) located at Heritage; 3) manually collecting required data especially for the clinical registry; and 4) communicating with primary care physicians for those clients who have chosen to stay with their primary care physician instead of seeing the CHIC PA. Funding from this supplemental grant will help solve the first 3 obstacles by integrating the information from CHIC into Heritage's record. Contracting with the software provider for help in summarizing data from the electronic record and imputing into the clinical registry will reduce staff time when reporting client data. To address the 4th obstacle, Heritage will be able to send a Clinical Care Record (CCR) to care providers through encrypted e mail as requested which will give the doctors a summary of the client's visit.

As a part of the project we have some outside evaluators that we have contracted with to provide us with an overall and on-going evaluation of our project progress toward goals. Recently the lead evaluator, Jim Zahinser, conducted a series of interviews with staff and clients and below you will find three consumer vignettes that came from those interviews.

Person Centered Healthcare Home

Consumer Vignette 1

“Jane” – first consumer interviewed (African-American Female)

In what ways has your involvement in this program affected your life?

I can breathe better and walk better. It used to be hard for me to walk; I was out of shape. I can now walk the same distance without difficulty breathing. My blood pressure has gone down; before it was higher than it's supposed to be. It's gotten a lot lower and I and I can FEEL the difference. I have a blood pressure cuff at home that I can use myself to measure my BP; I got it before starting the program, but now I use it regularly.

What have you done to help yourself? Are there difficult things that you have had to do to make changes or improvements in your life?

Just try to have a low calorie diet – do proportion control. I was doing Weight Watchers but that is too expensive for me. In this program I am doing a lot of the same things.

I have a BP cuff that I am using now more regularly to test my BP (see above).

Are there health problems that you were struggling with before you got involved in this program? Has the program helped you with those problems?

Again, my high blood pressure has gone down since I started the H&W program. Now, it is within the normal range, whereas, before, it fluctuated between high and normal. (She also takes blood pressure medication, but has been taking that since before entering the H&W program.)

Obesity: I used to weigh 431 pounds, but I have gotten down to 373 [a 13.5% drop; 5% is considered clinically significant]. My goal is to get down to 300 by the end of the year.

Before you got involved in this program, was your health care coordinated well between different medical staff (doctors, nurses, etc.) that you saw? Has this program helped coordinate your care better?

It was good before because I was getting my medical care from CHIC and MH care here. But, now, I'm getting medical care and MH care at Heritage – I like it better because it's just more convenient.

What about coordination between medical care and mental health/substance abuse care—has that improved, or not?

Again, the co-location is more convenient. But, even though coordination was good before, it's even better now. If I'm sick or something I can go to just one place—more convenient.

Have you become involved in health and wellness activities? How have these affected you?

I walk with Adriane (H&W Coordinator) every day – for exercise class on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. I also have health classes on Tuesday and Thursday and I exercise in the morning on those days. I like it a lot. It's fun – exercising together with people and it's helping me because I'm losing weight. I was actually GAINING weight with Weight Watchers—wasn't exercising every day, like I am now.

Have you incorporated any of these activities into your life outside of Heritage?

I walk at the park sometimes by myself now. I wasn't doing that before. When the swimming pool opens up I'm going to go swimming more with my Mother and with Kathy Bourne. They have a water walking program that I will participate in.

Has your involvement in this program changed the way you feel about yourself? How so?

I feel better about myself because I'm losing weight and feeling better physically. I feel better about myself, too—more often in the day I feel good about myself than before. I see a lot of friends here (at the H&W program) now and I enjoy the social aspect which makes me feel good.

Has your involvement in this program affected people close to you – family and friends? How so?

No. Just the same.

Has this program changed your approach to coping with your health and mental health problems? How so?

Yes, well, pretty much the same. The Transitions (PSR) program helped me and I have coping methods in my head. I can still identify triggers, and that sort of thing.

Anything I failed to ask about that is important?

I like my relationships with the staff in this program. They're getting stronger; I'm getting to know the staff. They're doing nice things for me.

Consumer Vignette 2

“John” – second consumer interviewed (White Male)

In what ways has your involvement in this program affected your life?

One word—“happy”—explains the whole thing. We have fun at it. They [staff] help us lose weight. Adriane is so nice to all of us; I think the whole program will work. I have not lost THAT much weight, yet (3 pounds) but I have only been at it for a month. If I did both the YWCA and this program, I would really be losing more weight.

What have you done to help yourself? Are there difficult things that you have had to do to make changes or improvements in your life?

I have done a few things. For example, I have changed my diet – eating fruit and vegetables at least once per day. My nutrition and diet are better.

I have participated in the exercises. You look forward the H&W activities and classes and you're excited about it.

Are there health problems that you were struggling with before you got involved in this program? Has the program helped you with those problems?

Yeah, and I'm still struggling with diabetes. I have a hard time giving up candy bars. I've cut down [my consumption] by HALF in the past 2 weeks, but I still struggle a bit. [Q] I don't know if the program has really helped me with diabetes, yet. They said they would begin working with me on that later.

Before you got involved in this program, was your health care coordinated well between different medical staff (doctors, nurses, etc.) that you saw? Has this program helped coordinate your care better?

I am still with my primary care physician and I like him. Coordination is good.

What about coordination between medical care and mental health/substance abuse care—has that improved, or not?

[Doesn't know of any communication between PCP and the H&W program.]

Have you become involved in health and wellness activities? How have these affected you?

It's a well-planned program and they've got the right person doing it (Adriane) I'm more active than I used to be. I think this is good for me. It's healthy exercising; it builds up your self-esteem with the people around you—some you know, some new to me.

Have you incorporated any of these activities into your life outside of Heritage?

I have changed things I buy at the grocery store—for example, I now get diet syrup for pancakes. At the grocery the other day I didn't buy ANY snack items. Before this program we used to buy about two boxes of snack food items when we went to the grocery store. Not incorporating exercise yet into my life, but now with warmer weather I'm going to. Adriane is really stimulating me to want to lose weight.

Has your involvement in this program changed the way you feel about yourself? How so?

I have better self-esteem. I'm happier, partly because I know how much [his girlfriend] loves this program. We both have better self-esteem and meeting new people we enjoy in the program is part of that.

Has your involvement in this program affected people close to you – family and friends? How so?

No, besides his girlfriend (see above)

Has this program changed your approach to coping with your health and mental health problems? How so?

In a way, yes, and in a way, not. Yes: cutting back on candy bars; grocery shopping for healthier foods; overall, being more aware of my health, my weight and my diet. I'm more 'on top of things' like that.

Anything I failed to ask about that is important?

I think if you call everyone who comes to this program they're going to talk highly of it (or they wouldn't keep coming back to it).

Consumer Vignette 3

“Jill” – third consumer interviewed (White Female)

In what ways has your involvement in this program affected your life?

I used to weigh 269 pounds, but now I weigh only 241. [a 10.4% drop]

I am doing better. My Mom and Dad were shocked that I lost weight. I'm going to try to lose 40 more pounds. My motivation has increased. I feel good about myself. Everybody gives me compliments—that I'm doing well.

The program is doing excellent.

What have you done to help yourself? Are there difficult things that you have had to do to make changes or improvements in your life?

I used to get my food without caring. Now I measure out portions. Sometimes it's hard, but I just do it. Besides diet, I am walking from my house to here (Heritage BHC), and around my apartment complex. I often walk by myself at the apartment complex, **because other people have a hard time keeping up with me.** I have been going to (H&W) classes every day, unless I have a doctor's appointment or have to do some babysitting.

Are there health problems that you were struggling with before you got involved in this program? Has the program helped you with those problems?

Sleep apnea – walking and losing weight has helped me. I use a mask at night (and used it before enrolling in the H&W program). My triglycerides are high but I am eating more healthy and exercising and hope to do something about that.

Before you got involved in this program, was your health care coordinated well between different medical staff (doctors, nurses, etc.) that you saw? Has this program helped coordinate your care better?

The coordination was good before, and is about the same now. I have only seen [the primary care provider at Heritage] once so far. It's better that I'm seeing a woman doctor. I was seeing a man before.

What about coordination between medical care and mental health/substance abuse care—has that improved, or not?

It's not really better overall, but the program overall has made me feel better –losing weight and I don't feel like hurting myself as often. I share my feelings about hurting myself, when I have them, with my case manager who has me using coping skills.

Have you become involved in health and wellness activities? How have these affected you?

Yes: exercising, health eating and cooking class.

Have you incorporated any of these activities into your life outside of Heritage?

Yes, see above. I am walking to Heritage from my apartment, which takes about 20-30 minutes. I don't like all the food I'm getting in cooking class. That's an adjustment.

Has your involvement in this program changed the way you feel about yourself? How so?

Yes, see above – better self-esteem, feel better physically.

Has your involvement in this program affected people close to you – family and friends? How so?

Yes, my Mom and Dad have been surprised at how much weight I've lost. They're telling me to keep on doing it [this H&W program]. That shocked me, because it's a change for my Mom and Dad and others to be giving me positive encouragement.

Has this program changed your approach to coping with your health and mental health problems? How so?

Not really, except for what has already been mentioned (eating health, exercise, etc.)

Anything I failed to ask about that is important?

I think if you call everyone who comes to this program they're going to talk highly of it (or they wouldn't keep coming back to it).

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