



To: Family and Human Services Committee

From: Cynthia Belon, Behavioral Health Director
by: David Seidner, Mental Health Program Manager

Date: March 10, 2014

Subject: Memorandum on Board of Supervisor Request for Recommendation on AB 1421, Assisted Outpatient Treatment

Background

At the Family and Human Services Committee meeting on October 16, 2013, Behavioral Health requested additional time for the AOT Work Group to develop recommendations related to AB1421 Assisted Outpatient Treatment. Steven Grolnic-McClurg, the Mental Health Director at that time, resigned his position December 13, 2013. David Seidner, Mental Health Forensic Program Manager, assumed the responsibilities of chairing the work group. The activities of the workgroup have included additional review of literature, review of other AOT efforts, initial attempts to engage consumers on their knowledge of Contra Costa County Behavioral Health services, and solicited input at regional community presentations.

In an initial attempt to engage consumers with a variety of experiences within the Behavioral Health system, work group members Susan Medlin, Office of Consumer Empowerment Coordinator, and Douglas Dunn, family member, conducted outreach interviews to consumers in diverse settings. Consumers were interviewed at a shelter, a crisis residential program, a dual diagnosis residential program, and a secured treatment facility. The majority of consumers understood the array of services available, and attributed their participation in voluntary care to the support of family members and Behavioral Health staff. This process assisted the work group to develop strategies for collecting additional consumer feedback. Behavioral Health will continue to gather input from consumers and family members.

The work group heard a presentation from Douglas Dunn, who shared a family perspective on AOT. Dr. Charles Saldanha, chief psychiatrist for Contra Costa Regional Medical Center, presented on the topic of Anosognosia (defined as a condition in which a person who suffers certain disabilities seems unaware of the existence of his or her disability.) Matt Schuler, Assistant Sheriff, Lt. Mike Evans of the Sheriff's Office, and Lt. Robin Heinemann of the Concord Police Department led a discussion to explore possible collaboration with law enforcement agencies regarding AOT services.

In addition to the above, Behavioral Health held three presentations on Assisted Outpatient Treatment in the three regions of the county. Notification of these presentations were posted on the Behavioral Health Web site, and sent to the Mental Health Commission, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), and service providers. Attendance at the public presentations was nominal; however, the majority of attendees provided feedback endorsing AOT services in this County.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are directed at addressing service needs of individuals with psychiatric disabilities who are currently not receiving County mental health services, may be marginally engaged with their care provider, or are reluctant to utilize services offered. The recommended strategies are to provide outreach, enhanced caregiver access and integration, and an AOT pilot program.

1. Outreach and Engagement

Engage individuals with psychiatric disabilities who do not seek treatment or who have disengaged from treatment by:

- a. Piloting a program similar to San Diego County's In-Home Outreach Team (IHOT) to provide home or community-based support, engagement activities, and education to consumers/potential consumers, family members, and their caregivers.
- b. Establishing an outreach line specifically for calls from caregivers who are concerned about the deteriorating mental health of their loved one. Phone line referrals may result in outreach teams meeting with consumers and their supports to provide information, referral and linkage to services.

2. Educate and Coordinate with the Consumer's Support Network

Improve the mechanisms for family members, caregivers, and support networks to provide input into the process of care by:

- a. Developing an AOT welcome packet for each consumer and their support system which contains a brochure identifying the levels of care potentially available, and a short description of the indicators for qualifying for AOT. The welcome packet may include a list with contact information of the care team for each consumer, i.e. clinic program staff. The welcome packet may also include educational information that describes potential symptoms of decompensation that would indicate a need to contact staff for support. The Welcome packet will also be available on the Behavioral Health Web site.
- b. Piloting a behavioral health navigator position (a peer or family member) in each adult clinic to assist consumers and family members in accessing needed care.
- c. Partnering more fully with NAMI Family-to-Family through the navigator positions.

- d. Co-facilitating multi-family groups at each adult clinic that offer psychoeducation and support.

3. Pilot an Assisted Outpatient Treatment Program

An AOT pilot may provide the ability to involve consumers in care who do not respond to attempts at outreach and engagement, choose to not enter care, have a serious psychiatric disability, and are at risk for hospitalization. This program will serve a maximum of ten (10) consumers, and develop and track clinical and cost measures that will be used to evaluate program success in increasing consumer outcomes and reducing costs. Please see attached “Laura’s Law (AB1421) A Functional Outline” from the State of California Department of Health Care Services Web site.

Next Steps

Behavioral Health has had preliminary discussions with the Contra Costa Superior Courts, the Public Defender, and County Counsel regarding potential cost and impact on attorney and court activities. The Behavioral Health Division understands that the Board will need input from these Departments that will be affected by the implementation of a pilot AOT Program prior to issuing a final order. We will therefore await further direction from you before developing a budget and staffing recommendations.

Attachment