

Lackawanna-Susquehanna Behavioral Health/Intellectual Disabilities/Early Intervention Program



Program Accomplishments 2020

I. Overview

Calendar Year 2020 brought with it many challenges for The Lackawanna-Susquehanna Behavioral Health/Intellectual Disabilities/Early Intervention Program, our provider network, and consumers of service. The COVID-19 pandemic created multiple challenges for the essential services delivered by both our staff and our providers. Both staff and providers responded to the challenges presented with exceptional innovation and dedication to ensure that individuals with mental illness and intellectual and developmental disabilities continued to receive services in telehealth, teleintervention and face-to-face modalities as indicated by their assessed needs. Our priority quickly shifted to managing risk, health, and safety for the vulnerable population we serve.

We continue to manage the pandemic as the calendar year ends. We look forward to a future that allows us to reunite face-to-face with our Advisory Board, our provider network and other community stakeholders but we are committed to keeping safe the individuals who rely on our system for their mental health and their ability to live in their community.

Although limited by the pandemic, we are pleased to share the following accomplishments for calendar year 2020.

II. Administration and Fiscal

❖ **Development and Implementation of Telecommuting**

On March 18, 2020 in response to the Governor's, and County Commissioners, declaration of a state of emergency due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Program began operating virtually with all staff (except the Administrator) telecommuting. Senior Management, working in conjunction with our Information Technology Contractor, initiated a plan to mobilize the technology resources necessary to complete all essential functions remotely. These functions include disseminating information and providing technical assistance to providers, completing all service authorizations, and processing billing, providing oversight to maintain compliance with regulations, and assistance in addressing complex issues created by the pandemic. To date the Program continues to assess community transmission of the coronavirus and manage staff schedules to mitigate risk.

❖ **Implementation of Pennsylvania's Medicaid Administrative Claiming Structure**

On July 1, 2020, The Department of Human Services (DHS) implemented a new process for the BH/ID/EI County Programs to report their Medical Assistance (Medicaid) administrative expenditures since the

previous methodology was not in compliance with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) requirements. A statewide Random Moment Time Study (RMTS) is now utilized to determine the county administrative costs to the Medicaid Administrative Claim. The RMTS has entirely replaced the previously used process by each county or joinder. The Lackawanna-Susquehanna BH/ID/EI Program successfully implemented the new process internally, and as a result, has submitted the 1st Qtr. FY 2020-2021 Claim to the DHS. Our first claim has been accepted and paid by the DHS. As a result of the new procedure, our program has received an increase in reimbursement for the first quarter from the Federal Government.

III. Behavioral Health

❖ Behavioral Health Department at Lackawanna County Prison

The Lackawanna-Susquehanna BH/ID/EI Program has worked jointly with Commissioner Domenick, Warden Betti, Deputy Warden Purvis, and the Lackawanna County Office of Drug and Alcohol Programs to develop a behavioral department at Lackawanna County Prison. Three newly hired staff, including two master's level clinicians, will provide support to individuals with mental illness and substance use disorder who are incarcerated. The staff will work jointly with the prison's medical provider (scheduled to start in February) and Scranton Counseling Center's forensic services department to coordinate support for individuals while incarcerated and planning for reentry. Our Program will be providing support and technical assistance to the prison while the fledgling department gets up and running and will coordinate with the new medical provider when they assume their role at LCP.

❖ Lackawanna County Suicide Prevention Alliance

At the request of Commissioner Chris Chermak, the Lackawanna-Susquehanna BH/ID/EI Program has worked with the Commissioner, the County Coroner, The Northeast Suicide Prevention Initiative and NAMI to launch The Lackawanna County Suicide Prevention Alliance. The newly formed Alliance includes community partners, law enforcement, first responders, and loss survivors and met December 8th for the first meeting. The Alliance will continue to meet monthly. Goals of the Alliance are to:

- reduce stigma
- increase public perception of mental health and substance use as health care issues
- provide education to community partners
- increase screening in schools, emergency rooms, and physicians' offices
- create a coordinated system of formal and natural supports for those at risk

❖ Youth Mental Health First Aid

The Program funded a youth Mental Health First Aid Training and partnered with NAMI to coordinate and train fourteen (14) Youth Mental Health First Aid trainers in February 2020. Staff from mental health provider agencies, Lackawanna County Office of Youth and Family Services, school districts, The Advocacy Alliance, and other community organizations participated in the three-day training, which is designed to teach parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors, health and human services workers, and other caring citizens how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health or addictions challenge or is in crisis. These new trainers will have the capacity to train many more community partners in Youth Mental Health First Aid and support youth in our communities.

❖ Resource Development for Adolescents

In conjunction with the Susquehanna Children's InterSystems Committee and the Lackawanna County System of Care, the Program responded to a need for information on vaping. A *Vaping Frequently Asked Questions* document was created in a question/answer format as a resource for providers and teens. A similar project was developed in response to community needs for resources to share with teens identifying as LGBTQ. The LGBTQ Resource Binder was distributed to all school districts in both

Lackawanna and Susquehanna counties. It provides information for schools, families, and students on vocabulary, documents, activities, resources, and services for LGBTQ youth.

IV. Intellectual Disabilities

❖ **Human Rights Committee/Human Rights Training**

The Program hosted specialized training for provider on the development and responsibilities of Human Rights Team. Human Rights Teams are charged with ensuring that all program participants are protected from rights violations and are supported in the least restrictive environment. Providers received technical assistance related to team creation and implementing behavior support and restrictive procedure plans for individuals that require exceptional supports to ensure health and safety. The training was well attended with over 50 participants.

❖ **Emergency Preparedness and Reintegration Planning**

Beginning in March the Program began engaging in both weekly and monthly phone contact with our local provider network and the Office of Developmental Programs to plan and respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Emergency Preparedness Activities were completed including coordinating planning efforts with County Emergency Management and Department of Human Services Emergency Response Coordinators. There was a focus on identifying resources and planning for crisis situations that might create a need for emergency mass shelter due to shortage of qualified staff. The Program also assisted the provider network with accessing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) through Lackawanna County Emergency Management. Last, we supported on ongoing workgroup of Community Participation Support providers to identify technology and other resources for remote support for individuals and families.

V. Early Intervention

❖ **Specialized Training**

In October 2020, the Program offer scholarships to Early Intervention Service evaluators, providers, and service coordinators to participate in Pennsylvania's Early Childhood Summit . The Summit is dedicated to building and sustaining a skilled workforce with Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) specialized training. Participants accessed new research, evidence based IECMH practices and resources to support their work with young children and their families. Eleven individuals received scholarships and completed this specialized training.

❖ **Expansion of Evaluation Tools to Support Infants and Toddler**

During 2020 the Early Intervention Program added an additional assessment tool to support the evaluation process of infants and toddlers for Early Intervention services. The additional tool, the Developmental Assessment of Young Children-2 (DACY-2), enables evaluation team members to identify developmental delays in infants and toddlers more accurately when seen for developmental assessment in a virtual modality. The Program was pleased to offer this additional tool to our evaluation team.