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# *Best Practice Fact Sheet – Addressing Major Barriers*

## *MINNESOTA’S ADULT REHABILITATIVE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (ARMHS) - Ramsey County*

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### **Program**

**Description:** Master’s level staff provides clinical/functional assessments, weekly home visits (life skills and rehabilitative services) and SSI facilitation to TANF clients. The county also provided the Intensive Integrated Intervention Program (IIIP) that was very similar to ARMHS except it also provided subsidized work and was limited to those nearing the end of their TANF time limit. The IIIP project ended due to costs.

**Target Population:** TANF clients diagnosed with a serious mental health condition

**Goals:** Stabilize condition and move to SSI or prepare for competitive employment

**Caseload Data:** 18 to 25 participants per master’s level (or nearly) worker & licensed clinical supervisor (compared to 90-100 caseload for other TANF cases). 540 clients served as of February 2008.

**Cost:** Primarily covered through Medicaid reimbursement for home-based mental health rehabilitative services from the ARMHS practitioners, but that didn’t cover the costs from no-shows or for the full scope of services provided.

**Evidence:** Mathematica briefs – descriptive output studies and the Urban Institute Study, Minnesota’s Integrated Services Project multicomponent study employing a range of research strategies and data sources.

**Assessment:** Screening and diagnostic assessment by a licensed clinician, followed by a functional assessment by an ARMHS practitioner

### **Description of Services**

- The Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services (ARMHS) Medicaid program began in 2001, and broadened to serve TANF clients in 2005 as part of Minnesota’s Integrated Services Project and continues to this day. Minnesota is a State-supervised, County-administered TANF program.
- The TANF agency used TANF funds to encourage local providers to apply for ARMHS licensure, an extensive process that takes about four months, with the condition that they would serve TANF clients. In addition, three existing community ARMHS providers contracted with Ramsey County for provision of services. Agencies that are approved as licensed ARMHS providers may receive Medicaid reimbursement for rehabilitative services provided. The six providers were Lifetrack Resources, Hired, Goodwill Easter Seals, Employment Action Center (Spectrum Community Mental Health), South Metro Human Services and Family Support Services Inc..
- Begins with an in-depth diagnostic assessment administered by a licensed clinician
- ARMHS rehabilitative practitioner conducts a functional assessment focused on 13 areas of daily functioning, with rating of one (no problem) to five (extreme problem)
- One-hour functional assessment includes vocational, educational, social, interpersonal, self-care, independence, medical and dental health, housing, use of transportation and legal issues.
- Client may be asked to complete a task (preparing a packaged meal) or answer questions like “Have you ever burned food or left the stove or oven on and forgotten about it?”
- ARMHS practitioner provides one-hour weekly home visits to provide life skills and home-based mental health rehabilitative services, determine if children are receiving proper care, identify work limitations, develop treatment

plan. Focus on skill development in such areas such as parenting, organization, problem-solving and communication.

- The home visits allowed the practitioner to observe the home for cleanliness and organization and the social skills of the client.
- The model, the ARMHS practitioner moves from assessment to an action plan. For example, a person with no access to a car and who didn't know how to use public transportation could be taught how to take a bus.
- Life skills included coping skills to manage stress, medication management, personal health and hygiene, home management (e.g., cooking, nutrition, cleaning) and strategies to avoid a mental health relapse.
- Once stabilized, helped them find a job and once employed, taught basic work habits and addressed any personal family issues that interfered with employment.
- Refer appropriate candidates to the Success with SSI program for facilitation via contract with legal services.
- Also used the functional needs assessment in the Intensive Integrated Intervention program for those nearing the end of their time limit (48 months of TANF), combined with bachelor's level, experienced job counselors for the intensive case management and six months of paid work experience with intensive supervision for those with low skills, limited work experience or who needed to work in a more supportive environment.

#### **Eligibility:**

Must have a diagnosed mental health condition and score three (marginal or inadequate) or above in at least three different areas of the functional needs assessment.

#### **Findings:**

- Relatively large increase in SSI approvals
- No increase in employment and earnings decreased, perhaps due to increased SSI approvals.
- Increased TANF stays. The desire to retain rehabilitative services may have contributed to this rise.
- Some benefits can't be quantified—such as a reduction in the future incidences of child abuse or neglect.

#### **Implications for Policymakers and Program Developers to Consider:**

- Initial and ongoing assessments identify what types and level of support client need to progress. Over time, new information may be uncovered about existing needs or the need for support may change.
- Assessments identify clients who need specialized services to progress, may reduce sanctions for failure to participate, identify unknown treatment needs and provide detailed information to guide employment planning and decision-making.
- It may be challenging to fund in-depth assessments and there may be some resistance to adopting new screening and assessment processes or difficulties training TANF staff in who to refer.
- More effective partnerships between TANF programs and programs of persons with disabilities provide access to skilled and specialized staff that can help those with complex conditions and personal and family challenges and teach them about their conditions and how to effectively manage their symptoms.
- Functional needs assessments move beyond identifying a disability to assessing how the disability influences the person's ability to live independently and succeed at work. It allows us to see how a person functions in real-life situations without presuming that a particular condition such as low cognitive functioning, anxiety or depression precludes work or participation in work activities.
- Untreated or inadequately treated mental health problems are common and contribute to clients' inability to participate regularly in TANF work activities or find and hold employment.
- The combination of low cognitive functioning and serious physical and mental health problems often make it difficult for clients to complete even the most basic activities such as maintaining personal hygiene, managing their bills, being at work and on time every day, keeping a home running and parenting.
- Services to address the needs of persons with low cognitive functioning and other serious barriers to employment are costly and in short supply.
- Serious personal and family challenges not only affect clients' abilities to find and keep employment, but also to parent effectively.

**Resources:**

Minnesota's Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services program was recommended by Doctor Donna Pavetti of the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. Information was also provided by Boyd Brown, Goodwill Industries (651-379-5875)/[bbrown@goodwilleasterseals.org](mailto:bbrown@goodwilleasterseals.org) and may be obtained from Gretchen Wartman, senior program manager, at 651-999-5646 [www.hired.org/jobseekers/mfip/index.htm](http://www.hired.org/jobseekers/mfip/index.htm)

["When Five Years Is Not Enough: Identifying and Addressing the Needs of Families Nearing the TANF Time Limit in Ramsey County, Minnesota"](#) Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (March 2006)

["Conducting In-Depth Assessments"](#) Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (February 2008)

["Creating Work Opportunities"](#) Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (February 2008)

["Providing Specialized Personal and Work Support"](#) Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (February 2008)

["Assisting TANF Recipients Living with Disabilities to Obtain and Maintain Employment: Final Report"](#) Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., (February 2008)

["The Minnesota Integrated Services Project: Final Report on an Initiative to Improve Outcomes for Hard to Employ Welfare Recipients"](#) The Urban Institute, January 2009

**The Urban Institute's Minnesota Integrated Services Project**

The Integrated Services Project evaluation sponsored by DHS and funded by the McKnight Foundation and DHS, is a multicomponent study employing a range of research strategies and data sources. The evaluation includes an implementation study and a study of participants' employment, welfare, and family related outcomes based on administrative data and information collected through the Employability Measure.

This report focuses on describes the longer-run economic outcomes for program participants. The report examines the outcomes of individuals who enrolled in the program after its inception in April 2005 through June 2006. This results in 987 participants across all the sites distributed as follows: Anoka County, 306 participants; Chisago County, 82; Crow Wing County, 86; Hennepin County, 93; Ramsey County, 123; Red Lake, 46; St. Louis County, 156; and Washington County, 95. The following data sources are used in the study: baseline demographic data, self-screening, screening tools, SSI, unemployment insurance and TANF data, field research, case file reviews and focus groups.