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# *Best Practice Fact Sheet – Addressing Major Barriers*

## *UTAH'S INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM*

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### **Program**

**Description:** Co-located Master's level clinical therapists provide TANF clients with in-depth clinical assessments, crisis intervention, and short-term therapy, referrals and SSI facilitation. They also consult/train TANF staff.

**Target Population:** Intensive case management for TANF clients with mental health, substance abuse or family violence issues

**Goals:** Find and keep work or transition to SSI

**Caseload Data:** Transitional Jobs program serves up to 60 clients of which 20 may be on TANF.

**Cost:** For more than a decade, Utah has hired a team of in-house licensed clinical therapists to identify and address mental health disabilities, substance abuse and family violence amongst TANF clients.

**Evidence:** Mathematica briefs – descriptive output studies

**Assessment:** Co-located clinical therapists (hired by Utah) provide diagnostic clinical and psychological assessments.

### **Description of Services:**

- In 1998, Utah hired licensed (master's level) clinical therapists and co-located them in TANF offices (called employment centers) across the state. As of February 2008, there were 21 licensed clinical therapists who provide in-depth clinical assessments, crisis intervention and short-term therapy to stabilize client conditions. May also uncover drug or alcohol additions (which commonly co-occur with mental health disorders), family violence or other barriers. They make referrals to mental health treatment providers or other appropriate services or treatment, provide clinical case management, and may facilitate SSI by helping them complete the application and obtain needed documentation.
- The clinical assessment takes 2 to 4 hours to complete over multiple sessions conducted at the employment center, the client's home or at another location convenient to the client. More complicated clinical issues or conditions may require additional evaluation time.
- Diagnostic clinical assessments provide more in-depth information on the type and extent of the disability and a diagnosis based on DMS-IV criteria that may help clients qualify and pay for specialized services.
- Clinical assessment topics typically include life stressors, coping mechanisms, family/social background, support systems, mental/physical health history, education level, emotional level of functioning, work/legal background, history of physical abuse and drug/alcohol use. Assessment may include mental health inventory to detect conditions such as major depression, generalized anxiety, and personality disorders/suicide risk. Therapist considers verbal responses and nonverbal cues, such as appearance, cognition and affect.
- The licensed clinical therapist:
  - Provides a short assessment summary for the TANF case manager and a more detailed evaluation for the Medicaid or contracted mental health treatment provider.

- Works with the TANF case manager (called employment counselors) to determine the types of activities and the number of hours to include in the client's employment plan and provides ongoing guidance in decision-making and how to interact effectively with the client.
- Links clients with a mental health disability to a mental health treatment provider and acts as liaison to ensure the therapy is high-quality and consistent with the client's employment plans. They monitor clients' ongoing progress and help them attend therapy appointments when needed.
- Trains and consults with TANF staff to help them identify clients with issues (e.g., flat affect, lack of self-esteem, poor body care or involvement in the child welfare system).
- Utah contracts with local mental health providers for short-term therapy where access to Medicaid treatment may be delayed or the client needs short-term and immediate intensive treatment.

### **Eligibility:**

TANF clients who may require services based on the initial TANF case manager assessment, when potential mental health, substance abuse or family violence issues are identified or when a client isn't progressing towards work (e.g., sanction or approaching time limits).

### **Findings:**

- No published data.

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

- Hiring staff to conduct in-house clinical MH assessments overcomes difficulties in TANF staff getting the information they need to develop appropriate employment and treatment plans; can also overcome clients' tendency to not show up for appointments in unfamiliar locations.
- 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.
- An up-front self-administered screen, with ongoing scans for "red flags" followed by a more in-depth assessment as needed that covers a broad range of disabilities may identify issues before clients end up sanctioned or discouraged because they are unable to meet program expectations.
- Key case management elements include: (1) initial and ongoing assessments to identify needed supports; (2) use of skilled and specialized staff; (3) intensive services approach with small caseloads; (4) efforts to blend supports with work; and (5) access to physical and mental health treatment.

### **Resources:**

Utah's case management and Transitional Jobs program was recommended by Dr. Donna Pavetti of the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. Information was also provided by Helen Thatcher, 801-526-4370 and Dorothy Hall 801-523-5970.

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

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