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Enhancing justice system and mental health outcomes in high need populations through the use of multisystem liaisons

Abstract:

Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) is a civil commitment program which incorporates intensive case management and other services to support adults with a serious mental illness. The overarching goal of AOT is to minimize participants' use of emergency psychiatric care and involvement in the justice system, while increasing their use of community-based care. This program requires effectively navigating several public systems such as the healthcare and court systems, which can be a challenge for both patients and participating agencies. All too often programs such as AOT involving multiple agencies and systems often fail due to lack of coordination, poor communication, increase system burden and/or competing expectations. Thus, in order to more effectively support high need clients at risk of ongoing justice system involvement, the Houston AOT program incorporated the use of a multisystem liaison to coordinate referral to and enrollment in the AOT program. This professional worked closely with providers at local psychiatric hospitals, psychiatrists and care coordinators at the local public health authority and the local probate court Judges and their staff handling civil mental health commitments. Through the implementation of this innovative approach to service coordination, the referral and enrollment process for the Houston AOT program was streamlined and additionalprovider burdens related to hospital and court documentation requirements were significantly reduced. Recommendations for integrating a liaison into joint mental health/court sponsored programs or other programs involving multiple agencies or systems will be presented to support improved client outcomes.

Biography

Micki Washburn is a faculty member at the University of Texas at Arlington. Dr. Washburn frequently integrates aspects of technology into her scholarship and has expertise in VR development and telehealth. Her current research focuses on the development of innovative culturally grounded interventions for individuals experiencing co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. Dr. Robin E. Gearing is a Professor and the Director of the Center for Mental Health Research and Innovations in Treatment Engagement and Service (MH-RITES) at the University of Houston. Dr. Jamison V. Kovach is an Associate Dean and Professor at the University of Houston.