

## **Spotlight on...Dane County System of Drug and Alcohol Treatment**

Since 2006, the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services Bureau of Prevention Treatment and Recovery, University of Wisconsin Department of Family Medicine, and Treatment Providers across the State of Wisconsin have worked together to implement the Network for the Improvement of Addiction Treatment (NIATx) Process Improvement model. Together, we have improved client's access to and retention in drug and alcohol treatment.

Many times, individual treatment provider agencies utilize the NIATx model to improve organizational processes within their own agency by pursuing individual change projects. Sometimes, however, agencies within a treatment delivery system recognize through a walk-through of the referral system, that processes can best be improved by tackling access and or treatment retention from a systems perspective. Dane County System of Drug and Alcohol Treatment is a great example of how utilizing the NIATx model, from a systems perspective, can yield better access for clients while saving money.

Sue Moran, Clinical Director for Journey Mental Health Center, and Todd Campbell, Addiction Services Manager for Dane County Department of Human Services, have participated in the STAR-QI program providing leadership to their agencies, Dane County, and their fellow STAR-QI peers.

When Moran began overhauling the intake process at Journey Mental Health Center in 2009, people who called seeking help with an addiction, were scheduled for an initial appointment a week or two later; 30-40% of those clients never showed up. Now, utilizing open intake days twice per week along with other improvements that have been made to the intake process, clients can often be seen same-day during Journey Mental Health Center's weekly open intake days. Capacity is another important component when addressing access. Through a series of process improvements, Moran and her Clinical Team have also increased the number of uninsured clients from 400 in 2011 to more than 800 in 2012, with no additions to staff.

Then in 2010, under the leadership of Campbell, the Journey Mental Health Center and other STAR-QI agencies in the Dane County System, including ARC Community Services, Hope Haven-Rebos United, and Tellurian, addressed waiting lists for county-funded treatment. Initially, 183 people were on waiting lists which ranged in time from two to four months. Today, that wait time is down 60%.

Not only has access improved for individuals, it has been done at a savings of \$266,000 from a dwindling county residential treatment budget, while also expanding other forms of care by as much as 23%. As a result, in January 2014, there wasn't a wait for county-funded residential care or day treatment. The wait for intake appointments at outpatient providers has also been eliminated, although there were still 68 people who were able to access group therapy but waiting to be assigned to a clinician.

Utilizing the NIATx model provided a structure to work together and improve communication which has helped the Dane County System of Drug and Alcohol Treatment improve services to clients. It will be an approach of continued collaboration that will help these STAR-QI providers continue to be responsive to needed improvements in their individual agencies and the Dane County delivery system for individuals seeking addiction treatment.