

Early Mental Health Screening, Assessment, and Referral

- The Mental Health Planning Council's (The Council) current strategic plan is based on the federal report, *Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America*, published in July 2003. This publication was written by the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health (The Commission).
- The Commission was appointed to study the mental health service delivery system and to make recommendations that would enable adults with serious mental illnesses and children with serious emotional disturbance to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities.
- Goal four of The Commission's report, also a goal of The Council's strategic plan, is "Early Mental Health Screening, Assessment, and Referral to Services are Common Practice."

What is early mental health screening, assessment, and referral?

- Screening is a relatively brief process designed to identify children and adolescents who are at risk of having disorders that warrant immediate attention, intervention or a more comprehensive review.
- Assessments are a more comprehensive, expensive, time-consuming examination of the psychosocial needs and problems identified during the initial mental health screening. Assessments identify the type and extent of mental health disorders and provide information for making recommendations for treatment interventions.
- Assessments typically require the expertise of a mental health professional to conduct the assessment and develop a comprehensive report. The purpose of a diagnostic assessment is to define the child or adolescent's concerns and use the information to develop a comprehensive treatment plan.
- Referrals are a process in which a parent, professional or other concerned party involved in the life of the child, adolescent or family will make to community resources for treatment interventions to address the identified diagnostic concerns resulting from the comprehensive assessment.

Why do we need early mental health screening, assessment, and referral?

- Children develop rapidly. Early delivery of mental health services and support early avoids life long consequences and can prevent mental health problems from worsening.
- 157,703 persons in ND are under the age of 18, as reported by Kids Count 2005.
 - 5,697 are diagnosed with a Serious Emotional Disturbance¹
 - 2,779 are in need of services²
 - 1,538 received services in through the Human Service Centers in FY 2006³
- Serious Emotional Disturbance affects 1 in every 10 young people at any given time.
- Studies show that at least one in five children and adolescents have a mental health disorder.
- Nearly 2/3 of all mental health problems are undetected by primary care physicians.
- A comprehensive screening and referral plan increases the likelihood of early intervention and avoiding life long problems.

What can be done to increase early mental health screening, assessment, and referral?

- Help spread the word about the need for expanded early mental health screening, assessment, and referral services.
- Support funding and practice of screening, assessment, and referral in early childhood and child care programs.
- Help recognize and encourage the use of early mental health screening, assessment, and referral and treat it as a common practice throughout the life of a child.

¹ Estimation based on 4.1% of total State Population under age 18 as specified for North Dakota by CMHS "Estimate of Prevalence for Adults with Serious Mental Illness (SMI)" (Federal Register, Vol. 64, No. 121)

² Estimation based on 2% of total State Population under age 18 as specified for North Dakota by CMHS "Estimate of Prevalence for Adults with Serious Mental Illness (SMI)" (Federal Register, Vol. 64, No. 121)

³ From ROAP children and adolescents with Pop Code 22



North Dakota Mental Health Planning Council

Mr. Lauren Sauer

Division of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services

1237 W. Divide Avenue, Suite 1C

Bismarck, ND 58501-1208

Tel: 701-328-8920