

Demonstrating Behavioral Health Impact Using Intensive Community-Based Services

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The Medica Foundation is the charitable giving arm of Medica Health Plans, a Minnesota-based, regional nonprofit health maintenance organization. The Medica Foundation funds community-based initiatives that support the needs of customers and the greater community by improving their health and removing barriers to health care services. Behavioral health has been a cornerstone funding area for the Medica Foundation over the last 10 years.

RESPONDING TO A COMMUNITY NEED

Individuals experiencing an acute episode of mental illness often face challenges navigating a fragmented health care delivery system and overcoming barriers to access appropriate medical and mental health services. The social impact on these individuals often includes a loss of employment, housing, and relationships. Without appropriate treatment and medication, individuals frequently access the emergency department and are hospitalized for both medical and mental health conditions. The Intensive Community-Based Services (ICBS) program was created in response to this community need. Short-term (two to six months) intensive services were provided through an innovative collaboration between Medica, Medica Behavioral Health, St. Louis County (Minnesota), the Minnesota Department of Human Services, and two community mental health centers.

ICBS services were provided by community mental health agencies to Medica members with complex conditions. ICBS provided both case management and direct care to address the specific barriers facing individuals whose needs often included mental health, chemical health, psychosocial, housing, and medical issues. Each ICBS provider had an identified Medica behavioral health care advocate who supported their work with members.

Evaluation of the ICBS program in St. Louis County showed significant reductions in hospital utilization for all members living in the county. Based on this success, the ICBS program was expanded to the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

STRATEGIC PROGRAM GRANT

In 2011 the Medica Foundation awarded a three-year, \$300,000 grant to Mental Health Resources (MHR) to

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expand the ICBS program in the Twin Cities. MHR is a progressive nonprofit organization that offers community-based mental health services. MHR specializes in serving complex clients who need mental health services and may also have co-occurring medical, substance abuse, or social barriers.

MHR's ICBS program provides three to six months of intensive case management services for high-risk adults with a chronic mental illness and/or substance abuse problem. The program helps clients successfully transition from an inpatient treatment facility into a community setting by coordinating complex health care and social services. These intensive services are not generally reimbursable by Medicaid or private insurance. Medica introduced a unique reimbursement model, which allowed MHR to fill a gap in the current mental health system. With funding support from the Medica Foundation, MHR was able to offer ICBS services to a broader population beyond Medica members—people who otherwise would not be eligible for the services.

Many of MHR's clients live on the margins of mainstream society and lack natural supports, coping mechanisms, and insight to see the consequences of their choices. They often have experienced abuse and neglect and grew up in poverty. When adverse experiences impact their lives, they do not have the skills needed to access community supports, nor the understanding that this support can improve their situation and well-being. The beauty of the ICBS program is its flexibility to tailor the intensity and types of services to meet individual needs.

MHR's case managers coordinated care and services, facilitated the communication between providers and social services, and frequently accompanied individuals to appointments. This promoted treatment and service continuity, as well as treatment compliance, which prevented the need for higher-level services.

EVALUATION AND OUTCOMES

To assess the impact of this program on clients' lives, MHR tracked the progress of a sample of clients toward a variety of self-reported outcomes while enrolled in the ICBS program, which included:

- 94 percent of the clients did not use acute crisis services.

- 97 percent avoided detox centers.
- 97 percent of the clients stayed out of jail.
- 82 percent of the clients took their prescribed psychiatric medications.

While these outcomes were impressive, MHR did not have access to the data needed to objectively analyze the clients' utilization of health care services. Medica Foundation engaged Medica Health Plan's evaluation team, who conducted an analysis of medical claims trends for a small group of Medica members who received services through the ICBS program. The team studied the monthly costs and utilization data for 30 clients enrolled in the program. Data were reviewed for a six-month period prior to the clients receiving MHR services and the six months after they began receiving services. This represented a unique partnership between a nonprofit organization, funder, health plan, and behavioral care organization.

CLAIMS ANALYSIS

As shown in Chart 1, Medica members in the ICBS program had a significant reduction in high-dollar claims, including inpatient admissions and emergency department visits. Conversely, there was an increase in the use of prescription drugs, which aligned with the goal of stabilizing clients' mental health. Overall, there was almost a 50 percent reduction in medical spending for Medica members who participated in the program.

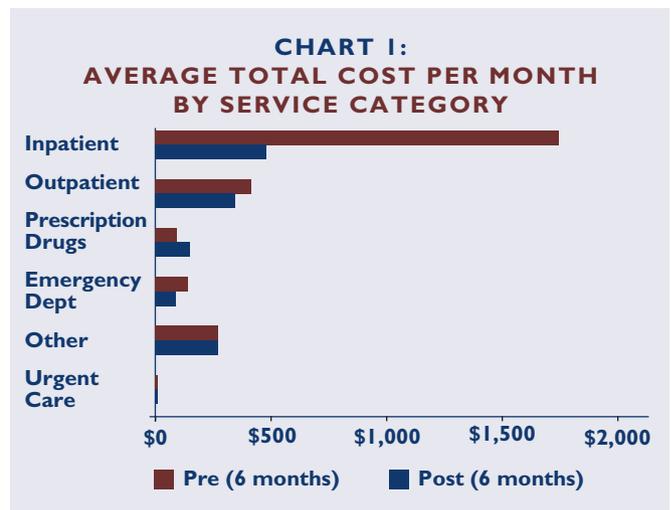
Specifically:

- Inpatient hospitalizations were reduced by 72.2 percent.
- Emergency room visits decreased by 35.4 percent.
- Urgent care visits decreased by 12.5 percent.
- Outpatient visits decreased by 18 percent.
- Prescription drug usage increased by 57.2 percent.

KEY LEARNINGS

These results demonstrate that MHR's intensive case management services helped stabilize clients' lives during the recovery process and also reduced medical spending by 50 percent in a six-month period. The most significant impact on medical spending was reducing inpatient hospitalizations. Clients also substantially increased their prescription medication compliance.

A July 2014 issue brief by The Commonwealth Fund states, "There is a growing recognition that social factors—such as individual behavior, socioeconomic status, and the physical environment—have a greater impact on health outcomes than medical care... However, policymakers must contend with some challenges... There is little evidence to support a positive return on investment (ROI) for integrating services." The program that MHR implemented with the support of the Medica Foundation and Medica Health Plans offers evidence in support of a strong ROI.



NEXT STEPS

MHR continues to share the ICBS program results with local health plans, health systems, and funders. They are hopeful that the reimbursement model developed by Medica and Medica Behavioral Health will become universally adopted in Minnesota. With appropriate reimbursement and funding, MHR has the opportunity to build on this project. The ICBS model highlights the importance of integrating primary care and mental health care along with intensive care coordination that addresses the social determinants of health.

The Medica Foundation is proud to fund innovative ideas that advance systemic change by ensuring higher quality care and outcomes, at significantly reduced costs.

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Medica Health Plans contracts with Optum, a behavioral health managed care organization, branded as Medica Behavioral Health, to manage their behavioral health benefits.

SOURCES

McGinnis, Tricia, Maia Crawford, and Stephen A. Somers. *A State Policy Framework for Integrating Health and Social Services*. The Commonwealth Fund. July 2014. http://www.commonwealthfund.org/-/media/files/publications/issue-brief/2014/jul/1757_mcginnis_state_policy_framework_ib.pdf.

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