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Mental Health Services in Essex County

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Mental Health Resources for Providers

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Problem Identification

- Mental health services in Essex County are limited; providers often have limited resources for patients as a result

AHEC Behavioral Health Integration



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Public Health Cost

- Increased rate of opioid and illicit drug use as well as overdoses
- Social and educational disenfranchisement of youth in communities
- Mental health distress rates are increased
- Alcohol use and alcohol-related events/sequelae increased

What does the community say?

2022 Stakeholder Survey

Essex County & Regional Stakeholders said **mental health** was a top health concern

Essex County & Regional Stakeholders said a **lack of mental health services** was a top contributing factor

2022 Community Survey Result Snapshot

Access to Mental Health Services was identified as one of the **top 5* health challenges** in Essex County according to residents.

**Overweight/obesity, chronic disease, substance abuse, and access to healthcare were also selected.*

Almost half of residents who responded to the survey categorized their mental health as **less than "good"** or "excellent".

47%

Community Perspectives

Referrals and Access

Rob Demuro, M.D. , Elizabethtown Community Health Center

“Once you get outside Elizabethtown, from the standpoint of therapists, there's not many... there's just not a lot of private [providers] out there...”

“If they can't find services in Essex County, it falls to the other counties around.”

“Mental Health has really struggled to recruit psychiatrists... We actually got a grant to hire a psychiatrist at the hospital but we just couldn't find anyone.”

Barriers and Prevention

Terri Morse, Master Director of Mental Health Services - Essex County

“We are in a professional shortage area. In general, not just for mental health.”

“Even if we recruit someone, there's no housing here to keep people. So housing is a huge barrier.”

“We are trying to be much more proactive instead of reactive as things have been for the past decades.”



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Targeted Intervention

This project aimed to support clinicians in Essex County with a list of updated resources to better support mental health referrals.

A dedicated list of providers in Essex County was created and given to the providers of the ECH clinics for use in directing patients who self elect to seek mental health care.



Results and Response

- Due to the limited timeframe of this intervention, results were unable to be obtained
- Resources were distributed to physicians for utilization in clinics
- Perceived need by primary care physicians was addressed directly



Evaluation and Limitations

- Though this intervention was implemented, it was not possible to gather data due to time constraints
- Ideally, we would be able to survey the physicians at ECH to elicit opinions and continued needs for mental health resources and guidance
- Measuring quantitatively, we could use the number of enrollments at Essex County Mental Health services, as well as the Public Health Department statistics to gauge how well utilized these resources would be
- In addressing the need for condensed resources, this intervention was unable to address the core need for more mental health services in Essex County
 - Incentives and grants are likely needed to continually hire more MH providers

Future Directions

- In future projects, or in continued efforts towards mental health improvement in the county, it would be reasonable to work more directly with patients
- Time could be spent identifying barriers for patients to find providers, not just for the physicians
- Evaluation of UVM ECH in-patient services for mental health crises and feasibility of hiring an in-patient psych management team
- Evaluate the process of referral from primary care setting to the outpatient mental health services in Essex County



References

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