Enhancing a Recovery Coaching Intervention with Housing and Barrier Relief Funds to Address Gaps in Basic Needs and Reduce Barriers to Medications for Opioid Use Disorder

Amanda Fallin-Bennett, [1] Trevor Moffitt,[2] Kayla Combs, [3] Clinton Underwood, [3] Jennifer Miles,[3,4] Julie Nakayima,[2] Elizabeth Larimore, [2] Margaret McGladrey,[4] and Sharon Walsh [3,4]

[1]University of Kentucky (UK) College of Nursing[1], UK Substance Use Priority Research Area, [3]Voices of Hope, [4]UK College of Medicine – Center on Drug and Alcohol Research, [5]UK College of Public Health

Introduction

- Medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD), particularly methadone and buprenorphine, greatly reduce opioid overdose mortality.
- However, only 15% of individuals with opioid use disorder (OUD) receive MOUD (Mauro et al, 2022). Many structural barriers prevent interest individuals from linking to and remaining on MOUD (e.g., lack of stable housing or access to a phone).
- To address this need, the HEALing (Helping End Addiction Long-Term[SM]) Communities Study-Kentucky (HCS-KY) and Voices of Hope (VOH) developed an enhanced recovery coaching program allowing Recovery Coaches (RCs) to apply for funds to help their participants address these barriers (e.g, rental/emergency housing assistance) and build recovery capital.

Methods

- In the second eight counties that received the HCS-KY intervention (Walsh, 2020), RCs held person centered coaching sessions with participants to facilitate goal setting and identify barriers to MOUD linkage and retention.
- RCs were placed in agencies such as syringe service programs, opioid treatment programs, and criminal legal system settings.
- RCs attempted to address barriers by looking for existing resources in the community and, if none were identified, submitted requests for Housing and Barrier Relief funds through the HCS-KY REDCap.
- Requirements for Housing and Barrier Relief funds differed based on type of assistance requested (e.g., housing, barrier relief, or cell phones), but all programs required program enrollment, 1-2 sessions with an RC, and RC recommendation.
- Each week, RCs completed a wrap-up survey to document program successes and challenges.

Results

- Examples of frequently requested assistance included supporting vehicle repairs, housing, utility bills, state identification, and out-of-pocket costs for MOUD.
- The program served 94 participants with rental or emergency housing funds and 198 individuals with funds for other barriers, totaling $204,970.
- RCs frequently reported that the Housing and Barrier Relief funds helped their participants avoid interruption in their MOUD and build recovery capital.

Type of assistance	Examples	Participants	Cost
Housing	Rental and emergency housing	94	$84,632
Barrier Relief	Utility bills, government IDs, car repairs	198	$120,339
TOTAL*		**292**	**$204,970**

Case Examples

"I was able to offer our barrier relief services to a participant…so that we can get her car fixed, and by doing so, we are increasing her recovery (capital) making it possible to get to recovery supports, go to meetings, possibly gain a job. She will be able to make it from Scott County to Lexington to the doctor for her MOUD without concern for her car making it.."

"My participant who was in emergency housing got moved into their apartment thanks to the help of Housing Assistance helping to pay a deposit for them. Now he and his daughter have a stable living environment."

Discussion and Conclusion

- Providing Housing and Barrier Relief funds as an enhancement of an RC program is a promising intervention to help participants avoid loss of access to basic needs (e.g., shelter and transportation) and should be evaluated prospectively for its impact on these outcomes.
- More research is needed to evaluate the impact of Housing and Barrier Relief funds on MOUD linkage and retention.

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