

Directions for Mental Health One of Five Organizations Chosen for National Council Collaborative Project on Depression

The National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare (National Council) has chosen five community behavioral health organizations to participate in a Depression Care Collaborative to improve the quality of treatment for persons with depression. This year-long project seeks to measure patient responses to depression treatment to guide improvements in care. Directions for Mental Health of Clearwater, an FHP Partner Provider, was one of the organizations chosen to participate.

“If we don’t measure it, we can’t improve it,” said Linda Rosenberg, President and CEO of the National Council. “And we are committed to improving care for depression. It is one of the most debilitating illnesses. Yet with effective care, we know people can recover and have full lives,” she added.

An estimated 1 in 10 U.S. adults report depression. Depression is a major cause of disability, lost productive time among workers, and death by suicide in the United States. On average, people living with depression go for nearly a decade before receiving treatment, and less than one-third of people who seek help receive minimally adequate care.

The National Council’s Depression Care Collaborative participants will receive expert consultation from the Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement. The project seeks to introduce standardized tools and measurements for depression screening and treatment — including regular tracking of PHQ-9 scores — and encourage treatment changes when the response to treatment is inadequate. The project focuses on care management — routine follow-up, education and support, treatment adherence and side effect management and increasing patient skills in goal setting and self-management of their depression.

The five healthcare organizations chosen to participate in the National Council’s Depression Care Collaborative, which is sponsored by AstraZeneca, are:

- Community Network Services, Farmington Hills, MI
- Directions for Mental Health, Clearwater, FL
- Jefferson Center for Mental Health, Wheat Ridge, CO
- Preferred Behavioral Health of New Jersey, Brick, NJ
- WellSpring Resources, Alton, IL

“The value of measurement-based care for depression is evident in discussions between the patient and clinician. The results from the use of tools like the PHQ-9 already help inform treatment decisions at each scheduled appointment in our clinic. We are looking forward to the lessons we’ll learn through the National Council’s Depression Care Collaborative to further improve measurement and the quality of care,” said April Lott, CEO of Directions for Mental Health in Clearwater, FL.

Learnings from the year-long collaborative will be developed into toolkits for dissemination throughout the public behavioral health system.