

Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board

LOB #265:

ENGAGEMENT, ENTRY, ASSESSMENT AND REFERRAL SERVICES

Purpose

The goal of the Engagement, Entry, Assessment and Referral service area is to serve as the single point-of-entry, or “front door”, for the CSB to triage people for safety, and to help them get appropriate treatment that meets their needs.

Description

Engagement, Entry, Assessment and Referral Services include the following programs:

PATH (Program to Assist in Transition from Homelessness) is a federally-funded grant program specifically targeted to serve the most vulnerable homeless persons who experience mental illness and substance use disorders, who would otherwise not engage in appropriate services. According to the Point in Time survey conducted by the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness in 2014, 55 percent of single individuals who were homeless (294 out of 530) suffered from serious mental illness and/or substance use disorders. PATH targets these most vulnerable people and helps connect them to services they need.

Working with individuals on the streets, in the woods, at hypothermia locations, and at the shelters, PATH focuses on the development of independent living skills and connecting individuals to assistance and treatment that can help keep the individuals and the community safe. Specific services include outreach, engagement, assessment, counseling/therapy, case management, crisis intervention, medication services, support services, daily living skills training, treatment for co-occurring disorders, recreation and social activities, and links to needed resources.

The **Assessment Unit** is the single point-of-entry (i.e., “front door”) for individuals requesting CSB services. In a welcoming and engaging environment, the program provides comprehensive behavioral health assessments of individuals seeking service from the CSB to insure that the individual receives the appropriate level of care.

The **Call Center** assessment begins at the time of initial phone contact. If an individual calls requesting services, call center staff obtains information regarding the individual’s resources and support and evaluates the urgency of their needs. When clinically indicated, call center staff immediately transfers the call to Emergency Services.

- If the person is an adult seeking services, they are invited to come to the Merrifield Center for a screening and assessment to determine if they meet CSB admission criteria. If the individual cannot readily go to the Merrifield Center, they are offered an appointment with the Assessment Unit at another CSB site (Northwest, Chantilly, Springfield or Gartlan).
- Youth are offered a scheduled appointment with a clinician specializing in services for children (7 and under) or youth (8 to 17).
- In FY 2015, the Call Center received 18,390 calls.

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Walk-In Assessment. Clinical staff engages the individual (and family members as indicated) focusing on immediate concerns, needs and preferences. A clinical screening is completed to assess the individual's need and eligibility to receive CSB ongoing services. In FY 2015, the Assessment Unit served 1,594 individuals.

- If the individual is eligible and interested in receiving service, staff conducts a comprehensive evaluation to determine the appropriate level of care. The evaluation includes assessment of risk and mental health status, treatment history, physical and psychiatric conditions, life area functioning, support for recovery and willingness to participate in treatment. The individual is given information regarding potential courses of treatment and is then referred to the appropriate level of care within three business days.
- If the individual is not eligible for ongoing services within the CSB or would like to pursue treatment in the private sector, the clinician discusses community treatment and referral options and business support staff work with the individual regarding insurance coverage.

Benefits

PATH (Program to Assist in Transition from Homelessness)

PATH serves some of the most vulnerable residents in the community, providing street outreach and clinical services to homeless individuals, helping them enter services to address mental health and substance use disorders, and linking them with supportive housing options and resources in the community.

PATH is part of Fairfax County's Continuum of Care which coordinates homeless services in the County and is a key partner in the countywide effort to prevent and end homelessness. PATH staff participates in various joint efforts, including: planning meetings for a coordinated homeless intake; meeting with homeless services providers in the County to ensure efficient services; and participating in the annual Point in Time survey to help count homeless persons in the County. PATH staff are the primary providers of mental health and co-occurring treatment services to homeless individuals in the community.

PATH is involved in the County's Homeless Healthcare Program, which provides emergency medication services to the street homeless population. This is a partnership with the Fairfax County Health Department; funds are exchanged under a memorandum of understanding between the agencies.

PATH staff works collaboratively with the seasonal hypothermia program run by the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness and the other community partners in this life-saving effort, including faith communities and private nonprofit agencies.

Assessment Unit

The CSB's Assessment Unit provides a single "front door"/point-of-entry for CSB services and convenient walk-in services Monday through Friday at the Merrifield Center. These features make it easier for individuals to find information and appropriate assistance quickly. Additionally, the unit staff provides comprehensive assessments and facilitates rapid referral to ongoing CSB services.

The goal of Engagement, Entry Assessment and Referral services is to ensure safety – both for individuals with serious mental illness, substance use disorders, and co-occurring disorders as well as for the community at large.

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Mandates

PATH: Receives grant funding through the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency. PATH participation in the Continuum of Care is mandated by HUD, and in many localities in Virginia, including Fairfax, the CSB provides this service.

Assessment Unit: Code of Virginia § 37.2.505 mandates that the CSB function as a single point-of-entry for publicly funded mental health, developmental and substance abuse services.

Trends and Challenges

Trend: The homeless population has decreased slightly in the past few years, but the most vulnerable and hard to reach people are still out on the streets and in shelters. Many of these people need mental health and substance use disorder services but are particularly hard to engage. These persons also need specialized housing to meet these needs.

Challenge: Vulnerable homeless persons often need specialized housing to support them. There is a severe lack of this type of resource in Fairfax County.

Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
LOB #265: Engagement, Entry, Assessment and Referral Services			
FUNDING			
<u>Expenditures:</u>			
Compensation	\$2,413,303	\$2,462,447	\$1,965,480
Benefits	921,909	949,071	876,953
Operating Expenses	66,172	156,587	39,900
Total Expenditures	\$3,401,384	\$3,568,105	\$2,882,333
Total Revenue	\$858,018	\$845,859	\$841,028
<u>Transfers In:</u>			
Transfer In from General Fund	\$2,543,366	\$2,722,246	\$2,041,305
Total Transfers In	\$2,543,366	\$2,722,246	\$2,041,305
POSITIONS			
Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)			
<u>Positions:</u>			
Regular	36 / 35.5	35 / 34.5	31 / 30.5
Total Positions	36 / 35.5	35 / 34.5	31 / 30.5

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Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
Number of individuals served	1,816	1,745	1,594	1,443	1,443
Average cost per individual served	\$939	\$971	\$1,537	\$1,050	\$1,050
Percent of individuals able to access an appointment within 10 days of their initial call	83%	76%	93%	95%	95%
Percent of individuals who attend their first scheduled service appointment	81%	76%	65%	80%	85%
Number of calls received at the Call Center	NA	17,958	18,390	18,390	18,390

During the past fiscal year, 1,594 adults received services provided by the Assessment Unit, a decrease of 8.7 percent from FY 2014, primarily due to service redesign and the agency's priority access guidelines, adopted in May 2014. The priority access guidelines identify the priority service populations based upon definitions from the Virginia DBHDS, the Federal Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant, and Part C of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Individuals must meet the priority service population criteria to have consistent access to non-emergency/non-acute CSB services. Initial phone screening, wellness, health promotion and prevention services, and acute care and emergency CSB services remain available to all residents of Fairfax County and the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church. As a result of the priority access guidelines, the number of people who are referred to services in the community has increased and the number of people receiving assessments has decreased. The cost to serve each individual was \$1,537 in FY 2015. This is higher than in previous years due to the integration of mental health, substance use, and co-occurring disorder services and fewer clients served.

During the past year, the Assessment Unit service model has changed to align with the priority access guidelines, decrease wait times for assessment, provide consistent services regardless of disability, and create efficiencies by integrating two previously distinct teams. Historically, each team had a specific model for assessment and referral to CSB programs and people were assessed based on behavioral health disability. These teams have now been integrated, and outcomes for FY 2015 forward will reflect the newly configured Assessment Unit.

In FY 2015, 93 percent of those who requested an assessment through the CSB Call Center were able to get an appointment within 10 days. This is an increase over 76 percent in FY 2014 primarily due to the combined assessment team at the new Merrifield Center instituting a same-day assessment model. This percentage will likely increase further in FY 2016, when the same-day assessment model is implemented at all CSB assessment sites. Once same-day assessments are phased in at all sites, it is anticipated 100 percent of individuals will be able to get an appointment within 10 days. At that time, this service quality indicator will be replaced by a new indicator.

Data indicates that 65 percent of individuals who received an assessment attended their first scheduled service appointment in FY 2015. While this is lower than the 76 percent reported in FY 2014, service model changes over the past year have impacted data collection methods for this measure. The new priority access guidelines increased the number of people linked to services in the community, and data collection has not historically captured external referrals. Data from the first quarter, prior to the change in service design, indicates that the percentage remained at 76 percent. The percentage steadily declined as the model was implemented over the second and third quarters. Program staff report that people referred for services within the CSB are attending their first scheduled appointment at the same or higher rate as in the past. Data quality plans will address the tracking of program referrals, both internally and externally, to ensure more accurate data in future years. This is a data point that will be closely monitored, along with data points that indicate time between assessment and referral to a CSB program.

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The number of calls received at the Call Center increased over the past year, from 17,958 in FY 2014 to 18,390 in FY 2015. The Call Center is the central point of contact for CSB programs and the number that is published for all CSB inquiries and services. Call Center staff make assessment appointments and connect callers with specific CSB programs, provide information about services, consult with providers and link callers to other County agencies and services in the community. Call Center staff use translation services as needed and have the capacity to provide services in Spanish. Approximately 1,600 calls received in FY 2015 were from Spanish-speaking callers.

Grant Support

FY 2016 Grant Total Funding: Federal Pass Through funding of \$164,542 and 3/3.0 FTE grant positions supports the Engagement, Entry, Assessment and Referral Services LOB. There is no Local Cash Match associated with this grant. The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services provides funding for services for individuals with serious mental illness or co-occurring substance use disorders who are homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless.