

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene, Inc. at OASAS

Project Title: New York State Telehealth Network

Project Type: Sustainable Adoption

Executive Summary

Rural health care inadequacies are well documented; for those persons with developmental disabilities or mental health and/or substance use disorders (MH-SUDs), such services are exponentially more difficult to access. Care is further complicated as clients are highly vulnerable, with diagnoses/disabilities stigmatized. There are fewer specialty (i.e., developmental disabilities, MH-SUDs) care providers and referral options, compounded by high proportions of working poor and uninsured families in sparsely populated, often remote locations. The current fiscal crisis profoundly affects Federal, State and local services. The Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and others have characterized the specialty care treatment workforce as a workforce in crisis, stemming from lack of resources, high turnover and inadequate training/educational opportunities.

NYS Telehealth Network (NYS TN) will have a dual emphasis on reaching the rural populations in need of services and building a rural specialty care workforce that is reflective of rural minority cultures and offers continually higher quality and sustainable services to rural populations. Numerous studies and reports, including those financed by SAMHSA, other governmental entities, educational institutions and professional associations, have developed a set of common recommendations to address the specialty care treatment needs of rural areas. NYS TN will embrace these recommendations, effect meaningful health care economies and efficiencies and sustain services through the adoption of and training in Telehealth technology for specialty care.

Telehealth services will be developed for specialty care organizations in 34 rural counties through a comprehensive web-based system of video conferencing that links the multiple providers of services that are involved in a client's care. Health care will be improved through real time interaction between clients and service providers, among organizations providing services and those organizations that will become subsequently involved as a person moves through a continuum of care.

NYS TN will be a central component in workforce development within these rural areas. Through video conferencing, these professionals will be able to easily access training in evidence-based practice (EBP) approaches--treatments that are based on scientific evidence along with clinical expertise while taking into account patient characteristics, culture and preferences--to ensure that patients will receive the best available care. Existing rural Telehealth consortia in other parts of the nation will be identified and NYS TN will develop interdisciplinary Web-based training on core EBP areas and accessible Web-based interactive systems to allow stakeholders to share information about using EBPs in different

settings. NYS TN will work collaboratively with other technology users to promote further advances and Telehealth use.

With RFMH acting as fiscal agent, three New York State agencies (OASAS, OMH and OMRDD) will collaborate with community- and faith-based nonprofit and governmental organizations that serve individuals with MH-SUDs and/or developmental disabilities. The project focuses on 34 rural New York counties, with a combined population of approximately 2.4 million people. About 26 percent of New Yorkers live in rural areas and Hamilton County (Adirondack Region) has the lowest density (only 3 people per square mile). The federally-designated Appalachian region in New York State consists of 14 counties, covering 11,876 square miles, or 22 percent of the State and is sparsely populated, with just over 1 million residents (5.5% of the State's population). The average unemployment rate is 8.5 percent.

OASAS, OMH and OMRDD each oversees a statewide network of local providers within its respective jurisdiction, regulates and funds local services, including administration of competitively awarded grant programs, oversees the development of EBPs for clinical services, supports training and oversees professional standards for the nonprofit workforce. Operating collaboratively in a number of program areas and through the Interagency Inter-Office Coordinating Council, they ensure effective coordination of specialty care services as well as coordination with other State agencies, local and county agencies (e.g., criminal justice agencies, health, education, vocational training, housing, and children and family services, temporary assistance, aging, veterans, etc.). Each agency has statewide, web-based conferencing systems. RFMH will act as fiscal agent, ensuring that grant funds are awarded through a competitive process and quickly expended in accordance with ARRA requirements.

NYS TN will create or retain jobs in: project implementation and ongoing management and the nonprofit sector. The private sector technology field will benefit from the development and implementation of web-based workforce training. While jobs relating to manufacturing are unknown, it is estimated that more than 125 private sector positions will be created to provide system installation and ongoing vendor support. Additionally, this grant will directly fund 16 positions and leverage matching funds related to in kind services of State agency and local provider positions responsible for grant implementation and management.

Federal funding (\$9,306,700) is matched by 23% State and nonprofits in kind contributions (\$2,172,600).