

Community- Clinical Linkages



Background

Connecting mental health promotion and prevention strategies outlined in this Roadmap with clinical care will improve health outcomes for youth.

Coordinate mental health efforts across clinical and community organizations

Successful prevention and treatment integration will foster interdisciplinary partnerships; normalize the presence of behavioral health professionals in everyday life; and connect local, regional, and state-level investments in prevention and treatment efforts. An example of coordination of these efforts are pediatric care teams, which are a critical component for children and families in promoting mental and behavioral health and preventing disorders. A recent approach that integrates behavioral health services into primary care has proven very effective in improving access to coordinated, high-quality behavioral health services.⁴⁸ Integrated behavioral healthcare models expand understanding of mental health and access for both provider teams and families/caregivers.

Embed mental health promotion and prevention in clinical care

The Roadmap research process identified the need to embed promotion and prevention services in medical and behavioral health care. Our healthcare providers are offering much-needed services to address the youth mental health crisis, and the new Community Behavioral Health Centers support early problem identification and timely intervention. In addition to providing clinical services, it is critical to assess factors that increase the risk for poor mental health (for example, social isolation), educate youth and their families, and connect them to community partners to support assessment and education.

Integrate clinical care into community spaces

As part of these coordinated efforts, embedding clinical care in the many settings where young people are found is critical to supporting youth mental health needs. Examples of these strategies that arose in our interviews included embedding behavioral health providers at libraries and creating more partnerships between schools and behavioral health providers to offer mental health services. We must also invest in promising practices that integrate behavioral health into other environments as well, such as police departments, counselors and social workers at schools, libraries, and other everyday places that youth and families go. We need to continue bringing behavioral health professionals into more environments.

Recommendations

- Coordinate mental health promotion and prevention efforts across clinical and community organizations.
 - Create partnerships with community organizations that provide support for young people related to the promotion and prevention areas identified in the Roadmap. This includes those who are at risk for, or are struggling with, loneliness, isolation, low social support, or poor-quality relationships; struggle with problematic social media use; or need SEL.
 - Convene insurers, clinical providers, youth, families, community-based organizations, and community health workers to address local gaps in prevention.
 - Provide funding to support community and clinical coordination efforts.
- Embed prevention in both medical and behavioral health clinical work.
 - Medical and behavioral health providers should explicitly acknowledge mental health and prevention strategies as health priorities and ask youth and parents who are their patients about social connection, healthy social media and screen use, attitudes about mental health, and SEL skills.
 - Work with community health workers and community ambassadors to educate patients about the risks of and actions to address inadequate social connection; SEL skills; how to normalize mental health; and other strategies for prevention and intervention (e.g., screen limits).
 - Offer health and behavioral health professionals formal training and ongoing education about the health risks of social disconnection, SEL skills, how to normalize mental health, and other strategies for prevention and intervention (for example, screen limits).
 - Insurers should offer adequate reimbursement for assessing and addressing social disconnection and problematic social media use, and include these metrics in value-based payment models for healthcare providers.
- Integrate clinical care into community spaces.
 - Embed behavioral health providers in community centers, libraries, and youth groups, with appropriate permissions, consents, trust building, and so on.
- Keep equity in mind!
 - Acknowledge how oppression and racism impact trust with providers, and approach work with parents/caregivers and youth of color with cultural humility.
 - Consider the importance of having similar identities in fostering connections between clinical providers and youth and parents/caregivers.



SPOTLIGHT

Southern Berkshire Community Care Coordination

Southern Berkshire Community Care Coordination (SBCCC) is a community outreach project of Fairview Hospital in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Starting as a grassroots effort eight years ago, SBCCC has built strong service networks between pediatric practices and the two largest school districts in southern Berkshire County. The model of care connects pediatric providers with school staff in team-based care, where they support one another while providing optimal care and access to resources such as medical and behavioral health and educational, cultural, and social services for children struggling with issues such as anxiety, depression, ADHD, and learning difficulties. Care coordinators in the pediatric office prioritize family-directed goals informed by school and provider input; facilitate communication between families, schools, and pediatric providers; organize team meetings; support family navigation of the complex healthcare landscape, while enhancing families' self-management skills; maintain an up-to-date list of community resources; and track referrals and address barriers to success. SBCCC builds relationships with already-existing community resources including the Brien Center Community Behavioral Health Center and the Southern Berkshire Health Coalition.

SBCCC focuses on prevention by identifying and addressing problems early. SEL screening in schools and mental health screening in medical practices help identify children who would benefit from SBCCC's team-based care.

“Having a direct line of communication and support from healthcare providers is a game changer.... We are no longer on an island; there is a foundation built around families to close the communication gap and partner to provide care as a team.”

- school clinician, Berkshire County

Implementation of the SBCCC model of care has increased the success of referrals from school to community mental health services from 6 to 50 percent. The model emphasizes equitable access to resources and increases family engagement. The program has financial support from the Massachusetts Legislature, the Austen Riggs Center, BHS, CHP, and several local foundations.