



Happy New Year ACT network!
**Here's the latest Ohio Coordinating
Center for ACT E-Newsletter!**
1/2/07



PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services' Homeless ACT Team has been in existence since January 2005 and is one of the few teams of its kind in Ohio. They use an ACT model platform in locating and providing treatment to Cincinnati's homeless and mentally ill population.

Their mission is to find people who are chronically homeless and have a chronic mental illness, and help them become engaged in services and obtain permanent housing and benefits. Clients must be homeless for 1 year or at least four times in the past 3 years in order to be eligible for services.

One of the highlights of this team is that they physically seek out and recruit clients from areas frequented by homeless individuals who are not connected with services. They emphasize individualized engagement strategies based on relationship building. It often takes several weeks of regular contact with an individual before they let their guard down and agree to services. They are a good example of meeting the client where they are, both physically and mentally. The ACT model itself facilitates working with this population in that there needs to be regular communication and teamwork in order to help clients make progress. Another unique aspect of this team is that they have acquired some resources to address common barriers encountered by most of this population. They use housing subsidies (Shelter Care Plus Certificates) funded by HUD to help gain access to quick, stable housing.

They are in the process of gathering outcomes for the program in order to show evidence of its effectiveness as well as gain knowledge to improve the program even further. Initial outcomes data already show that this team has retained 84% of its clients for more than six months and have helped 82% of its clients retain housing for at least six months. These outcomes show great gains for the population served by this team.

The future of ACT is applying the model to specific populations in our mental health system. This team is on the cutting edge and exhibits some of the core concepts of the ACT model: assertive engagement and treatment in the community.

SUCCESS STORY

A client served by the team profiled above has an amazing story. He grew up in a middle class family in Cincinnati. In early adulthood he began experiencing symptoms of mental illness. His first encounters with the mental health system were less than positive, so he became disconnected from professionals, family, and in many ways society as a whole. He found himself living in one of the local parks, where he had made himself a home from brush and vines. He remained homeless for about 18 years...no benefits, no income, no housing. Almost 4 years ago he met some outreach workers. He was friendly and cordial, but denied he was in need of anything. From time to time he would see mental health workers, but refused help and always kept his distance. GCB's Homeless ACT Team began going to his place in the woods on a regular basis, slowly but steadily building a relationship with him. In the winter of 2005, he somehow broke his foot and was admitted to the medical unit at the hospital. He was discharged on the night of a winter storm, obviously in no condition to be outdoors, but without a home. His family found him and, after years of disconnect, took him into their home. It was at this time that the Homeless ACT Team, in collaboration with the family, was able to re-connect him to services and engage him in a treatment relationship. He insisted on going back to his place in the woods when his foot healed, so the ACT team continued to meet him there. After about a year of relationship building and assertive engagement, he began to trust the ACT team. The ACT Psychiatrist visited him in the park and also began building a relationship. Eventually, it was this relationship building that engaged the client and convinced him to allow the ACT team to help him move to an apartment. He has lived in an apartment for 1 year, now has benefits, and attends groups provided by the team. He also became agreeable to taking medicine again, which has helped decrease the symptoms of mental illness. The team connected him with a primary physician where he now receives treatment for diabetes and other physical health issues. He has become re-connected with family and shows insight into his illness and how it has affected his life. The Homeless ACT Team continues to see him everyday.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 1. OCCA workshop on 2/2/07 in Columbus- ACT 101 and 102, CEU's and lunch provided. Go to <http://register.healthfoundation.org> to register.**
- 2. Next ACT Team Leader conference call is 1/17...let me know if you would like to join us so I can send you an agenda. This is a regularly held conference call to network ACT Team Leaders and/or Supervisors.**

***If you would like to be removed from this list, please respond to this email with a request or call Jon Ramos at 513-458-6684.**

