Excerpt taken from http://www.saasnet.org/PDF/Implementing_Healthcare_Reform-First_Steps.pdf

Health Care Reform 2011

The federal Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) Block Grant, State general appropriations, and the State substance abuse agency play a critical role in assuring that people with Substance Use Disorders (SUD) have access to effective, high quality services, particularly prevention services.

On April 5, 2010, the final rule governing implementation of the Wellstone/Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act went into effect. These regulations include several provisions that improve access to critically important addiction and mental health treatment for millions of Americans, primarily requiring many health plans to cover addiction and mental health services on par with other health conditions. Passage and implementation of parity marked a milestone for addiction and mental healthcare advocates who had for decades fought for its passage.

On March 23, building on the success of parity, advocates watched as President Obama signed into law H.R. 3590, the "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act." The new law, approved by the U.S. Senate on December 24, 2009, and the U.S. House of Representatives on March 21, 2010, includes a number of provisions aimed at improving coverage for and access to SUD and mental illness prevention, treatment, and recovery services.

The unified and coordinated effort by advocates for people in need of SUD and mental illness prevention, treatment and recovery support services contributed greatly to the passage of this federal statute. The new federal healthcare law will expand coverage to tens of millions of uninsured Americans, resulting in coverage for approximately 95 percent of the legal population.

Hot Topics

While there are many areas of concern, providers have identified the following major areas that "are keeping them up at night".

- ✓ Integration with primary care
- ✓ Integration with primary care is a critical component of the new healthcare environment. A successful specialty treatment organization is one that will develop partnerships with local primary care physicians, hospitals, and clinics.
- ✓ Integration will not only increase the likelihood of success in the new environment, it will increase access to the more than 20 million people in need of substance use disorder services.

Additionally, it will:

- ☐ Improve care and address the needs of the whole person (e.g. substance use disorders and co-morbid physical conditions),
- ☐ Make treatment more accessible, closer to home,
- ☐ Offer services in a neutral site for those concerned about stigma,
- ☐ Increase service efficiency and reduce costs: more comprehensive array of service responses aligned with true service needs, and
- ☐ Improve health outcomes, increase patient satisfaction.

(FADAA, Physical/Behavioral Health Care Integration, Tips for Providers to Work Successfully with Physicians.)

✓ Information Technology (IT) Systems

This includes scheduling, billing, financial, and other systems to streamline operations. Effective IT systems also provide the mechanism to collect and analyze data necessary to measure and report on performance outcomes, productivity, operational efficiencies, and provide information that fosters informed decisions.

✓ Information Exchange

This also includes electronic health records. Integration with primary care will not happen without efficient and comprehensive communications methods.
"A key premise: information should follow the patient and artificial obstacles—technical, business related, bureaucratic—should not get in the way. Information must cross institutional and business boundaries…the goal is to have information flow seamlessly and effortlessly to every nook and cranny of our health system." (FADAA, *Advancing Reform Initiative: Critical Factors Influencing Implementation: Information Systems*).

✓ Workforce

Successful linkages with, and payments from, commercial insurance and managed care organizations (MCO) will depend heavily on a licensed/credentialed staff.

✓ Marketing

It will be extremely important to reach out to individuals and families as well as commercial insurers and MCOs. In addition to new, external marketing strategies, agency leaders will need to ensure they are marketing their organization to their clients. For example, the first impression a client receives when they walk through the door of an agency should be "warm and welcoming". Enhancing the feeling of openness and welcome a client feels when he or she enters an agency has been shown to increase engagement and retention in treatment.

✓ Compliance

For many, reform will present a new world of extreme oversight. Not only do organizations need to have the capacity to bill for services, but recordkeeping and other procedures will be important in making sure the organization "keeps the money".

✓ Recovery-oriented systems

Recovery–oriented systems will become even more important in the new healthcare environment. Systems will involve peers, treat the entire family, and recognize the importance of supporting individuals in recovery with a comprehensive network of recovery management and recovery support services.

Source: **Implementing Healthcare Reform: First Steps to Transforming Your Organization, *A Practical Guide for Leaders,* Recommendations from the Moving Forward Alliance, A collaborative effort coordinated by: NIATx and SAAS State Association of Addiction Services**