



Project: *Demonstration and Evaluation of Self-Direction in Behavioral Health*

website: www.mentalhealthselfdirection.org

Description

Project Background:

This project builds on research performed by some of the primary investigators into self-direction of services for older adults and people with physical and developmental disabilities (particularly examinations of *Cash & Counseling*), but this time with a focus on the effects for people with serious mental health conditions—and the impact on publicly funded behavioral health systems.

It's also a continuation of work performed by the team on a prior project: an environmental scan to understand the facilitators and barriers to self-direction in behavioral health.

Funders: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and New York State Health Foundation, with support from SAMHSA

Context:

Self-direction is a model for delivering individualized services and supports. Service users develop an individual plan and make use of a flexible budget to purchase goods and services to meet their recovery goals. Widespread adoption of self-direction is consistent with a recovery-oriented approach as well as with the values of person-driven services and self-determination, but as a relatively newer service delivery model, the evidence base is limited.

Many states are awaiting results from pilot programs, looking to see the effects on cost, service utilization, quality, health and wellness, employment and housing retention, and participant satisfaction. This project is evaluating implementation activities and outcomes as demonstration projects roll out across six states: Florida, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Utah.

Objectives/Scope:

1. Conduct a process evaluation in all six states: document program design, implementation successes and challenges, and strategies for overcoming challenges.
2. Conduct a system-level outcome evaluation in some of the states, exploring self-direction's impact on service utilization and system costs.
3. Partner with local evaluation teams in some states to explore self-direction's impact on outcomes such as mental health recovery, wellness, and self-determination.

Deliverables:

- Final evaluation report
- Peer-reviewed articles
- Set of guidelines for program replication and sustainability

Expected Project Benefits:

- A better understanding of self-direction's core elements and impacts
- Guidelines for implementation best practice based on states' experiences

Methods & Stakeholder Engagement

The team is using quasi-experimental and mixed methods approaches. They're examining outcomes and cost for participants and matched comparison groups and pre-post comparisons for self-directing groups (where possible). They're also conducting site visits and stakeholder interviews with state partners as well as with participants, brokers and managers, providers, and other stakeholders.

The project is overseen by a National Advisory Committee composed of participants, advocates, providers, and mental health leadership. A majority of the advisory committee members have lived experience of the mental health system.

Findings to Date

- "Mental health leadership perspectives on self-direction," published online in the journal *Social Work in Mental Health*, December 2017: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332985.2017.1395783>
- The emergence of mental health self-direction: An international learning exchange," published in *Psychiatric Services Open Forum*, January 2017: <http://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/abs/10.1176/appi.p.s.201600014>
- "Participants' assessment of the impact of behavioral health self-direction on recovery," published in the *Community Mental Health Journal*, February 2016: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10597-016-9999-0>
- *An environmental scan of self-direction in behavioral health: Summary of major findings*, project report: https://www.mentalhealthselfdirection.org/s/1373646290_ES_of_SD_in_BH_Summary_071213.pdf