

Building a Grant Funded Safety Net Support Program

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EMS of Virginia, a community based mental health services agency serving the Greater Richmond Area, utilized the SAMHSA Covid-19 grant funding by creating the Safety Net Support program, a fully grant funded program that increased access to community mental health services to adults and children who would not otherwise qualify for these services. Using our existing QMHPs, referral line and service line, we provided in-home mental health support services to 4 children and community based mental health services to 19 adults between August 2021 and March 2022. All services were intended to be short-term, up to 12 weeks, to give EMS the ability to maximize our impact in the area. The clinical management team used the grant flexibility to allow QMHPs to work with the individuals and families for the number of hours that worked best for their family, typically 6-10 hours weekly for clients.

The adult services focused heavily on care coordination and connecting clients to other community resources and supports, very similar to Mental Health Skill Building. Most of the 19 adult clients had Medicare-only insurance, which does not cover community based mental health services and several others were uninsured upon admission into services. Three of the clients were discharged directly from psychiatric hospitalizations into the Safety Net Support program and were brought in at a crisis-level, with a higher number of service hours each week for the first few weeks, often up to 20 hours each week to ensure clients were connected with resources quickly. With existing relationships, we were able to place a client in a sober living home to provide them with housing and assisted another client with applying for and receiving a housing voucher. We helped clients get connected to food banks, Caritas furniture, and clothing as needed. Overall, all of the adult clients were grateful for the services as many have been repeatedly denied for community based support due to their insurance restrictions or eligibility.

The children's services were focused primarily on behavior support and working within the family unit to increase communication and healthy boundaries. All four children were on commercial insurances that did not cover in-home mental health support services and the families were provided with a service akin to Intensive In-Home Services. The children were mostly referred by their outpatient therapists for additional support. We used our existing staff and treatment protocols from Intensive In-Home service clients to work with the Safety Net Support children and their families. The families were very grateful for the additional support to their families and were discharged to outpatient providers.

The Safety Net Support program was well received by our EMS staff and community partners. EMS was able to build on additional referral sources by offering the program, especially for Medicare-only insured adults who were unable to access many other community based services. The staff enjoyed less paperwork and more flexibility in how they could work with clients. EMS of Virginia is very thankful for the grant funding that allowed us to work with these otherwise underserved clients and families.