



Meeting the Health Care Needs of Adults with Severe Mental Illness

Adults with severe mental disorders suffer from higher-than-average rates of chronic conditions, such as hypertension and diabetes. Yet this population has less access to treatment and receives poorer quality of care than adults without mental illness. A team of analysts from the University of Pittsburgh and RAND outlined a framework and identified specific steps to improve general health care for this group. The team concluded that a key contributor to this problem is disconnection between the mental health care sector, which provides most of the care for the severely mentally ill, and the general health care sector. To address this problem, the analysts made a number of recommendations aimed at improving the level of clinical integration between these sectors, outlined in the following steps:

- **Reorganize mental health service delivery** to facilitate clinical integration. This step would involve mental health care providers assuming greater responsibility for their patients' general health, including screening for prevalent general health problems and helping patients develop self-management skills for chronic illness.
- **Promote greater communication and collaboration among providers** across the mental health and general health sectors, through the adoption of integrated clinical information systems and more balanced privacy rules.
- **Prepare the health care workforce** to meet all the health care needs of this population. This step involves both sets of providers acquiring skills and competencies, as well as making attitudinal changes, in a broad effort that spans several institutions.
- **Develop financing policies and practices that reward integrated care**, such as building into reimbursement policies provisions for cross-care and expectations for coordination and information-sharing.
- **Strengthen accreditation processes** so that accredited health plans share uniform coordination-related requirements. This step could involve asking the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality to develop measures to assess care for people with severe mental illness.
- **Develop federally sponsored research and demonstrations** focused on coordination. Research needs to evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of quality improvement interventions and of evidence-based practices for people with severe mental illness that might be well suited to improving this population's general health outcomes.

Washington External Affairs Office

703-413-1100 x5632 | wea@rand.org | www.rand.org/congress

RAND Offices

Santa Monica, CA • Washington, DC • Pittsburgh, PA • Jackson, MS • Doha, QA • Berlin, DE • Cambridge, UK • Leiden, NL

RB-9191 (2006)

This product is part of the RAND Corporation research brief series. RAND fact sheets summarize published, peer-reviewed documents or a body of published work. The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors. **RAND**® is a registered trademark.

© RAND 2006

www.rand.org



HEALTH

THE ARTS
CHILD POLICY
CIVIL JUSTICE
EDUCATION
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT
HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
NATIONAL SECURITY
POPULATION AND AGING
PUBLIC SAFETY
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
SUBSTANCE ABUSE
TERRORISM AND
HOMELAND SECURITY
TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
WORKFORCE AND WORKPLACE

This PDF document was made available from www.rand.org as a public service of the RAND Corporation.

This product is part of the RAND Corporation research brief series. RAND research briefs present policy-oriented summaries of individual published, peer-reviewed documents or of a body of published work.

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world.

Support RAND

[Browse Books & Publications](#)

[Make a charitable contribution](#)

For More Information

Visit RAND at www.rand.org

Explore [RAND Health](#)

View [document details](#)

Limited Electronic Distribution Rights

This document and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law as indicated in a notice appearing later in this work. This electronic representation of RAND intellectual property is provided for non-commercial use only. Permission is required from RAND to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of our research documents for commercial use.