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Planting the Seed

Transformational change and innovation can be viewed as a necessary concept by community mental health workers, stakeholders, and community partners, such as court systems, hospital settings, etc., in communities that serve individuals coping with a mental health diagnosis. A potential paradigm shift is needed in the assessment and treatment of individuals with mental health diagnoses and also the use of other substances. The DSM-5-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2022) defines even a mild dependence on Cannabis as including merely the presence of only 2 to 3 of the 11 defined symptoms. Foglia et al. (2017) note that substance may rise because of the widely acknowledged use of Cannabis today by relaxed laws, decriminalization, and legalization of small amounts in many states; cannabis is not viewed as a harmful substance by many, which is only amplified by the use by individuals with serious mental illness. This transformational change undertaking aims to explore policies and protocols starting with approximately 10 of approximately 75 clients on my shared caseload team with substance use histories/concerns. Urinalysis (UA's) readings from their community supervision officer will measure the initiative's outcomes. Because clients are not using cannabis, the chances of their psychotropic medication greatly increase, which significantly increases their probability of successful integration into the community.

Organization

It is vitally important to have healthy employees to serve clients best and help them achieve better life outcomes. The Mission of Integral Care reads: "Integral Care's mission is to improve the lives of people affected by behavioral health and developmental and/or intellectual challenges" (Integral Care, n. d.). Bryson & George (2024) highlight that "mission

provides a sense of purpose” (132). Organizing is necessary for any organization to set forth its mission and ultimately achieve its vision. Richardson and Casey (2024) note that Integral Care also works closely with Austin State Hospital (ASH) and coordinates with ASH for beds to divert from ASH, Crisis Respite, Jail Competency Restoration, and Jail Diversion (Richardson & Casey, 2024). The agency mandates, such as Integral Care staff not being permitted to make recommendations in the courtroom, can hinder client progress out of fears of hypothetical perceptions. Chance (2009) notes, “Bureaucracy, often associated with government agencies and large corporations, is characterized by a hierarchy of authority, top-down decision making, and impersonal interaction” (p. 17). Directives are expected to be followed and mandates acknowledged. Chance (2009) points out that organizations are slow to change (p. 11).

In a community such as Austin/Travis County, Integral Care needs to continue to serve its population because of the systemic need for the individuals who frequently utilize Integral Care’s services but would otherwise be un/underserved. As central stakeholders, clients need access to person-centered, trauma-informed, culturally competent, linguistically appropriate, multicultural, integrated, and collaborative care for Integral Care to achieve its Vision of “Healthy Living for All.” The organization needs to communicate with all divisions, community agencies, law enforcement/judicial, hospital systems, and key stakeholders such as employees, administrators, and community partners to clarify the vision of Integral Care.

Environment

Organizational change can be unpredictable; with institutions/agencies doing community work, internal and external climates must focus frequently. In today’s ever-

changing world, it is tough for many to keep pace with the rate at which organizational changes occur in work environments. With more and more work environments interconnected today, a shortfall at one organization could very well trigger a domino effect, touching several other organizations which they have close business ties with, causing those companies just now affected to pass along the disharmony, creating an unstable atmosphere for more than just themselves.

Assessing an organization's environment to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges/threats (SWOT/C) can be challenging. Opportunities/threats are usually external and refer to future potential for sound or detrimental effects (Bryson & George, 2024, p. 155). Leadership is necessary in organizations to assess and navigate organizational structures through uncertain times. Community mental health work is very ambiguous, and often, leaders participate in the process at some point to achieve desired outcomes.

Assessing an organization's internal and external environments is necessary for long-term survival. A good leader should be aware of the multiple factors that can potentially threaten the organization while keeping a sharp eye out for growth opportunities. This is another opportunity to practice mindful leadership, a positive factor for successfully managing today's organizational climate. Threats can arise pending the fiscal year budget questions.

Strategy

Creating strategy while envisioning an organization's potential for success and failure can and should be a delicate process. This will require clients on forensic commitments

to pass urinalysis drug screenings as required by the county prosecution as part of their routine court appearances. As an agency-wide policy, an initial strategy would be to evaluate the various programs to assess which types of programs can benefit from additional treatment options. The purpose of this initiative would be to shorten the duration of the client's commitment to the judicial system. However, one challenge will be the potential client buy-in into the initiative. Another consideration is to have the clients more involved in goal setting to reach their desired aspirations. Chance (2009) highlights that “individuals are more satisfied when they are involved in goal setting” (p. 139).

Integral Care must be mindful when identifying the organizational mandates by watching out for potential pitfalls in this process. With autonomy, community-based work entails employees charting their pathways in a workday, and clarifying an organization can clarify the organizational mission and values of an organization. The best strategy within an organization is to have the closest consensus amongst its employees. Bryson and George (2024) note that opportunities and challenges are usually more about the future, and strengths and weaknesses deal with the present more than anything else.

It is valuable to pinpoint both challenges and opportunities for Integral Care's growth by identifying its strategic issues. Bryson and George (2024) note, “Strategic planning focuses on achieving the best *fit* between an organization and its environment, which will involve changes to the organization, the environment, or both” (p. 54). It is essential to consider various options when formulating strategies to manage issues. Reviewing and adopting the strategies and plan may be necessary for the implementing groups, and the

organization is going to have to approve the strategies or plan while continuing to pay attention to the goals, concerns, and interests of all the key internal and external stakeholders (Bryson & George, 2024).

The final components of strategizing include launching an adequate organizational vision by getting organized, implementing strategies and plans, and reassessing the strategy and the strategic planning process (Bryson & George, 2024). The authors point out that by reassessing strategy and the strategic planning process, “learning and mindfulness of this sort involve capacity building, attention to resilience and sustainability, and most importantly, ongoing learning” (p. 68). The FACT team will reassess the strategy every 180 days during treatment planning and make adjustments, if needed, to ensure effectiveness.

Implementation

Starting an initiative of this magnitude within the local mental health authority will require consideration of multiple factors to be successful. As part of the Forensic Assertive Community Treatment Team with Integral Care, there is a growing push for some client attorneys to want assistance from FACT to help their clients comply with the court’s recommendations while under the court’s monitoring of no substance use. This initiative will require innovation because Bryson & George (2024) note that strategic thinking infers following an implementation method that fits the context, the organization, and other entities. FACT will need to implement a plan which can be measured. One way to measure this would be to focus on the positive/negative urinalysis results always released with clients at their monthly court hearing on the mental health docket. A structural approach seems to make the

most sense; actions such as this can require a lot of different organizations. FACT would be in charge of the implementation of this initiative

Maintenance

Successfully monitoring progress towards existing goals will require ongoing collaboration and monitoring by various agencies working together to achieve the desired outcomes. Due to having at least three separate entities of Integral Care's Forensic Assertive Community Treatment, Travis Co. Adult Probation, and The Travis Co. Court system, each having jurisdiction, no one is entirely in charge of the client's well-being, with each having distinct roles to play. Being able to create a positive outcome for individuals with serious mental illness to achieve maximum positive effects of prescribed psychotropic medications will require a unified approach due to the shifting societal views on cannabis due to its potential for harm. By having a unified front, with consideration for stakeholders, and by living up to its mission and, ultimately, its vision, Integral Care will require dedication from all facets of the organization to follow a pathway to carry out the strategy.

Integral Care will take full responsibility for transportation to court and community supervision appointments. Clients usually have monthly supervision and court appointments, which can be weekly or every six months, before graduating from the program. The measured UA's during community supervision will help initiate a baseline with consistent monitoring. Clients will complete quarterly surveys to identify benchmarks for the progress of the initiatives.

Communication

Communication is integral to the human experience because it drives how humans meet their needs. From very basic to highly complex, communication is vital throughout the process. Healthy communication is necessary for every facet of the process, from building relationships, diagnosing problems, gaining appropriate resources, coming together on the solution, gaining acceptance, and stabilizing the process.

Because of the different agencies potentially to be considered in the decision-making capabilities entailed, it is appropriate to consider the organizational structure and types of communication channels to use. So, more planning will be necessary to carry out the objectives currently to align with court, prosecution, defense attorney, and Integral Care FACT Team objectives. Being able to articulate the current status of how habitual repeat offenders consistently fail urinalysis tests for cannabis, gaining buy-in, finding out what motivates FACT clients for behavior change, and “selling” a brighter future to clients as their life optionality can have increased due to being substance-free.

Communication is vital in the helping professions and is necessary for all involved to meet their unique needs. To record and report progress changes and constantly improve processes, leaders and stakeholders will have to meet, at least quarterly, at the Program level to assess progress and identify places for improvement. Records will be kept for the initiative to thrive, and reporting will help identify actions to promote Integral Care’s vision of “Healthy Living for All.”

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