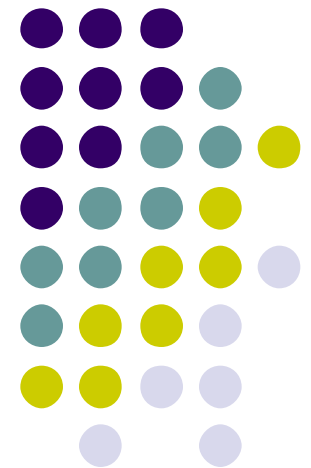


Boston Community Academic Mental Health Partnership

Developing a Sustainable
Community-University
Participatory Mental Health
Research Collaboration



Boston Community Academic Mental Health Partnership



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Community-based participatory research (CBPR)



- Aims to bridge the gap between researchers and the community (i.e. those researched)
 - Community members have meaningful opportunity to fulfill the role of “researcher”
 - Capacity-building through co-learning & cross-training
 - Equitable involvement of partners throughout process
 - Problem definition
 - Methodology development
 - Data analysis and interpretation
 - Exploration of culturally relevant solutions

Persons with mental health and/or addiction recovery needs



- Historically not involved in directing research
 - Defined by disease (“subject”)
 - Stigma
 - Lack of social and economic power
- As a result...
 - Service gaps
 - Barriers to service utilization
 - Treatments not evidence-based

Persons with mental health and/or addiction recovery needs



- Community-based participatory research on the rise
 - Non-clinical populations (community prevention)
 - Providers
- Limited role for people with MHARN
 - Advisory councils
 - Consumer interviewers
 - Data entry assistants
- Few CBPR efforts offer consumers opportunity to fully participate in the research process

Boston Community-Academic Mental Health Partnership



- Provides a mechanism for persons with mental health and/or addiction recovery needs (MHARN) to fully participate in the design and conduct of mental health research.
 - People living with MHARN
 - Consumer-run community organizations
 - Academic researchers
 - Public policy makers and service administrators



Development of B-CAMHP

- In 2006, the National Institute of Mental Health funded Boston University School of Public Health to:
 1. Develop B-CAMHP
 2. Conduct pilot study of psychiatric emergency care
 3. Develop future proposals



Partnership Infrastructure

- **Steering Committee**

- Representatives from 6 partner organizations
- Focus on gaining firm ground in the grassroots community
- Committee meets monthly and guides development of processes, policies, and practices

- **Project Teams**

- Consists of members of the Steering Committee, community-based research assistants and representatives of community agencies relevant to topic
- Direct and manage implementation of research

Community Researchers



- Persons living with MHARN and/or a family member
- Experience with PER services preferred (either self or family member)
- Interest in research and motivated to learn
- Diverse skills

Responsibilities:

- Integral part of project team
- Drive final study design, creation of instruments
- Conduct interviews
- Analyze and interpret results
- Develop action plan

Training and Certifying Community Researchers



- 16+ hours of training for conducting ethical research
- 5+ hours of qualitative interview skills training
- A variety of teaching methods utilized:
 - Didactic presentations
 - Recorded practice interviews
 - Transcript critiques
 - Observed interviews
 - Role playing
- Oral and written exam

Psychiatric Emergency Services: A pilot study



Goal: Increase our understanding of the repeat use of psychiatric emergency services by adults. More specifically, we aim to:

- Explore perspectives of people with MHARN and family members on psychiatric emergency services
- Translate research findings into action



Pilot Study Design

- 40 semi-structured interviews with service users (defined as people who have used emergency services twice in the last 30 days) and their family
- Interviews last approximately one hour
- Includes questions about the person's experiences with psychiatric emergency care
- Subjects are compensated \$20

Progress To Date



- Five community members certified as Community Researchers
- Implementation plan finalized
- Instruments created and ready to be piloted
- Fully approved by BUMC and Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Institutional Review Boards
- Received Commissioner's Award for Excellence in Research from DMH

Developing the B-CAMHP: Challenges



- Adherence to the principles of CBPR
 - Balancing day to day operations with shared leadership and decision-making
- Imbalance in financial and structural factors
- Keeping partners engaged
- Diverse organizational missions
- Staff turnover

Challenges of CBPR for Public Mental Health Research



- Traditional IRBs are not equipped to review these types of projects
 - Worked with multiple boards to educate members about CBPR
 - Faced challenges around assessing “capacity to consent” to participate in the research process
 - Led to statewide changes in practice

Lessons Learned



- The “community” is difficult to define
- Challenge to reflect the diversity of our community (ex. stages of recovery, race, age, gender)
- Flexibility needed to negotiate the complex process of implementing this type of project
 - Community RAs: Build in time and resources
 - IRB: Know and educate your IRB