



NQP Standards of Care

Improving the Quality of Addiction Treatment

Open Society Institute Funds TRI and UCLA in Stakeholder Dissemination Meetings on NQP Treatment Standards

Two Conferences for Public/Private Sector Stakeholders to be Conducted in 2009

In 2005, the National Quality Forum (NQF) published a report entitled National Voluntary Consensus Standards for the Treatment of Substance Use Conditions: Evidence-Based Treatment Practices. Unhealthy substance use, it is clear, qualifies as a significant public health problem and has led many leaders in the treatment field to identify a need for treatment quality measurement and reporting.

Development of consensus standards was very timely for a number of reasons. They include growing recognition that substance use disorders most often constitute a chronic illness; the long-standing work of the Washington Circle Group focused on performance measures throughout the process of care; recent scientific advances in treatment; and, a growing awareness that implementation of proven practices has lagged.

The identification of “consensus standards” is a critical component of the contribution that NQF has made to the ongoing dialogue in the treatment field about the impact of evidence-based practices (both organizational/administrative and clinical) on the improvement of treatment. The NQF has developed consensus standards in other areas of healthcare including, Hospital Care: Specialty Clinician Performance, Prevention and Management of Stroke Across the Continuum of Care, Perinatal Care, Emergency Care, Adult Diabetes Care, etc.

In 2004 NQF convened a group of 19 experts to discuss evidence-based treatment for substance use disorders. A background paper was used to establish an extensive list of candidate practices which were then evaluated by a group of participants in a workshop based on “their own experience and their knowledge of the literature.” Prior to the workshop a number of criteria were identified for establishing whether a practice was evidence-based and of sufficient importance to be considered “high priority.” The high priority measures were then evaluated in a consensus process to arrive at a set of practices deemed sufficiently effective that, “if implemented widely, are likely to benefit patients” (NQF, 2005) with substance use disorders.

In 2007, the NQF published the National Voluntary Consensus Standards for Treatment of Substance Use Conditions. Standards, by definition, imply that one can differentiate between effective and ineffective practices. The “message” that the NQF Standards

convey is that a set of effective organizational and clinical practices exist that should be required of treatment organizations and clinicians in order to improve the care being received by patients.

Dissemination of the NQF Standards

Stakeholders not directly involved in the NQF process need to be informed about the standards and engaged in implementation. Toward that end, two meetings will be held, one on the East Coast, the other on the West Coast. Both will be co- led and organized by Drs. Mady Chalk from the Treatment Research Institute (TRI) and Richard Rawson from University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA). Invited stakeholders will include:

- Single State Agency Directors and, in county-based states, County Directors of Substance Abuse
- Medicaid Directors
- Federal agencies such as SAMHSA, CSAT, NIDA, CMS, NIAAA, GAO
- Managed care organizations
- Accreditation Organizations such as JCAHO, NCQA, COA

Meeting focus will be to orient participants to the NQF message; specific goals are to:

- Orient stakeholders to the NQF standards and to the meaning of having standards for treatment of substance use disorders;
- Discuss how stakeholders can be involved in implementation and continued evaluation of the standards;
- Clarify the relationship between the NQF standards/measures and purchase of care;
- Identify potential leaders and partners among stakeholders who will stimulate initiatives to support implementation
- Identify barriers that different types of stakeholders may face in implementing the standards;
- Create a communication network that informs all stakeholders about implementation efforts.

For more information about the 2009 conferences or the NQF standards, contact Mady Chalk, Ph.D. at mchalk@tresearch.org.