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Authors: Sheila Fifer, PhD, Jeff Berko, MPH, Kristi Mitchell, MPH, Wendy Everett, PhD Nurse Practitioner and Liyana Ido, MPH, Atlas Clarity, San Francisco, CA

Implementing a Psycho-Social Rehabilitation Clubhouse within a Behavioral Community Health Center: A Multi-Framework Implementation Science Study

Background

Clubhouses offer psycho-social rehabilitation for individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) and have documented effectiveness in reducing symptoms and social isolation. However, few of the more than 300 Behavioral Health Community Health Centers (BHCHCs) serving disadvantaged urban populations offer Clubhouses. The California Healthcare Foundation provided a planning grant to a San Francisco BHCHC, Westside Community Services, in 2022 to determine if a Clubhouse model could be successfully implemented to serve its SMI clients and what, if any, adaptations would be required. Multiple dissemination and implementation (D&I) frameworks were used to guide the planning, adaptations, and rollout of this program.

Methods

Multi-layered Implementation Science frameworks were employed:

- **Expert Recommendations for Implementing Change (ERIC)** guided qualitative interviews with established Clubhouses, Westside management, clinicians, and patients to *plan* tailored implementation strategies.
- **Socio-Ecological Model** mapped behavioral and economic *barriers* across individual (patient), interpersonal (clinician), and organizational (management) levels.
- The **RE-AIM** framework structured the *evaluation* of implementation outcomes, balancing program fidelity with necessary contextual adaptations to the Clubhouse model.

Findings

Barriers included patient resistance to participation and membership, management concerns regarding financial sustainability, and clinician unfamiliarity with psycho-social rehabilitation. These were addressed through a peer planning group to suggest adaptations; active grant-writing to secure additional funding; and educational outreach and reporting on member experience to Westside clinicians.

RE-AIM metrics demonstrated success at two-year point of implementation:

- **Reach & Adoption:** Membership of 65 active SMI members supported by clinician referrals. The majority (85%) of patients visiting the Clubhouse joined and became active members.
- **Implementation & Effectiveness:** Fidelity to the original plan and milestones was maintained with adaptations to accommodate members' insecure housing, substance use, and recent incarcerations. These included locked storage for members' possessions, food and hygiene supply pantries, and emergency psychiatric care onsite. Members' survey reports showed global improvement in emotional health (90%) and reduced social isolation (74%).

Implications for Implementation Science Research

This project demonstrates the utility of combining complementary Implementation Science frameworks among stakeholder groups and across distinct implementation stages. Continuing collection and reporting of implementation data for iterative feedback to stakeholders was crucial for sustaining engagement, securing organizational buy-in, and guiding real-time adaptations.