TELEHEALTH IN THE NORTHEAST

NETRC PARTNERS WITH SUPPORT FOR ME PROGRAM TO IMPLEMENT TELE-SUD TRAINING/TOOLKIT

In late 2019, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) received federal funding from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to implement "SUPPORT for ME," a new program to assess and build Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment and recovery capacity in Maine. The SUPPORT for ME initiative is focused on enhancing Maine's response to the opioid crisis by increasing access to vital services for SUD .

In order to increase access to care for those living in rural and underserved areas across the state, and to help address ongoing workforce shortage issues, the SUPPORT for ME project includes a significant telehealth component. The Northeast Telehealth Resource Center (NETRC) has been collaborating with Maine DHHS since the inception of the project, to help lead the telehealth related efforts. The majority of NETRC's work on the SUPPORT for ME project has involved assessment of state-wide provider needs with respect to TeleSUD treatment and recovery services, and subsequent development of open-access training resources and provision of technical assistance to address those needs.

Like most projects which began toward the end of 2019, the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 resulted in the need to make some fairly significant shifts in approach. For example, while the needs assessment was conducted as planned, the results were different from what the team originally expected. Although most respondents indicated having access to a video conferencing platform and equipment due to rapid telehealth implementation efforts during the early months of COVID, providers requested additional licenses to increase capacity of SUD services, and nearly 90% of respondents identified lack of patient devices as a barrier to "seeing" patients in their homes. This scenario changed in the following months with respect to provider capacity to learn a new platform given competing priorities related to local COVID response, and more focus was given to providing technical assistance on video conferencing platforms already in place. And while trainings were originally to be done on-site in multiple locations across the state, then followed by web-based trainings to ensure broad reach, the pandemic forced the team to go with a completely virtual training approach instead. The team has continued to pivot accordingly throughout the process in order to best meet stakeholder needs.

Subject matter experts (SMEs) were recruited to cover key topic areas identified during the assessment, and the initial phase included live training via video. The pandemic continued to be a challenge with respect to provider availability to participate in live trainings, and so the team decided to develop a self-paced training option as well, to better accommodate schedules and increase access. The self-paced toolkit incorporates multiple mediums including didactic presentations by SMEs, interactive material, and mixed resources embedded throughout, and takes approximately 2 hours to complete. In order to further incentivize completion of the training, the NETRC team worked with the Maine Medical Education Trust (MMET) to secure CMEs, and AdCare Educational Institute of Maine to secure CEUs. Any Maine provider completing the toolkit, which includes scoring 80 or above on the quiz, and completing the evaluation, will receive 2.0 CME or CEU credits, depending on their license. Further, the activity qualifies for 2.0 credit(s) of the 3 CME credit requirement for opioid medication education found in P.L. 2015, Chapter 488, Maine's legislation to address the opioid drug crisis.

The SUPPORT for ME Toolkit is housed on NETRC's Telehealth Classroom portal. While CME and CEU are only available for Maine providers at this time due to Maine specific SUD telehealth policy content, the toolkit can be accessed by any provider at no cost, by setting up a user account on the portal.

The toolkit was developed for a wide variety of Maine providers, including medical and behavioral health, who will be utilizing telehealth to provide Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) services to their patients and clients. The topics covered in training toolkit include:

- Introduction to the SUPPORT for ME Program
- MaineCare Telehealth Policy and Guidance
- SUD Billing and Coding
- Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Workflows
- Leveraging Telehealth to Provide SUD Treatment and Recovery Services
- Video Visit Best Practices and Etiquette
- Patient/Client Resources
- SUPPORT for ME Portal Overview

Initial Feedback from End Users:

Joan Ingram, MPH - State Director - Groups, Recover Together - Maine

"I'll say overall I think it's really fantastic! Here are some of the things I found helpful and thought were great:
- Easy to navigate - user friendly scrolling toolbar as well as the flow of the content on the right.
- Great incorporation of written/ppt as well as videos
- Loved the highlights of the MaineCare rules from last summer (nice to have the complete document as well as the highlights)
- Helpful to have the oral presentations from the speakers as well as their slides
- Provider's guide to billing - this is great! Loved the chart on what is and isn't allowed
- Tools on language - really helpful to share with teams"

Sue Woods, MD, MPH – MAT Provider

"Everyone did a really great job. It flowed nicely, and was easy to get through. Has good content. Key info on practical issues in virtual presence and communication. Lots of information on policy and coverage. Important. In my experience folks want practical, how-can-I-do this information."