The Retention Toolkit: A resource to improve retention and engagement for substance use disorders treatment

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Introduction
The Retention Toolkit was created by a small team composed of a research scientist, librarians, and a prevention specialist at the request of the Washington State Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR). The Retention Toolkit is a website with eight primary education/training modules designed to assist substance use disorder (SUD) treatment programs in improving their client retention rates – specifically, to help clinicians and treatment organizations in the State of Washington improve client engagement and retention in SUD outpatient treatment settings in order to meet county retention goals. DBHR’s goal is to increase the percentage of clients retained in outpatient SUD treatment for at least 90 days from 62% to 70.7% among adults, and from 65% to 76.2% among adolescents.

Topics include potential barriers, communication with clients, cultural competency, motivational interviewing, use of incentives, family involvement, NIATx, and TARGET (Washington’s digital management and reporting system used by all state-funded providers to track services and outcomes). Each section of the site includes a description and rationale for the approach; tips, strategies, and success stories; resources such as links to selected online trainings, videos and webinars, and other information sources; and references and additional reading suggestions.

The Toolkit was created in support of Governor Jay Inslee’s Results Washington Goal 4: Healthy and Safe Communities, through a partnership between the Department of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) and the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute at the University of Washington. Research indicates that remaining in treatment for at least 90 days correlates with positive outcomes, including a reduction in substance use and criminal justice involvement. Longer involvement in treatment also increases the likelihood of employment, increased earnings, and housing stability.

Next Steps
The Retention Toolkit was well received from the DBHR Regional Treatment Managers, and The Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute was asked to partner with DBHR and Brandeis University to launch a quality improvement collaborative focused on improving client engagement and retention.

Treatment agency staff will be invited to attend webinars and conference calls focused on implementing changes to improve treatment engagement. As part of this process, they will also learn how to use the toolkit as a resource.
Brandeis University will collect data for their study and will be able to share with ADAI and DBHR their findings about the extent to which the Retention Toolkit helped increase SUD treatment retention rates. ADAI will maintain the toolkit with resources and trainings that are beneficial to SUD staff according to feedback from the agencies involved.

For more information about the Retention Toolkit please visit http://adai.uw.edu/retentiontoolkit/