New Jersey’s Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics

The Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) federal demonstration program launched in 2017 in eight states, including New Jersey. These programs serve adults and children and provide mental health and substance use treatment, crisis services, case management, primary health care and more. A per member/per month rate allows providers the flexibility to deliver truly holistic, integrated care. Study after study on the impact of CCBHCs report very positive outcomes.

New Jersey’s seven CCBHCs operating under the current federal demonstration program* have dramatically improved access to community-based substance use treatment and mental health care, having had the ability to hire many new substance use-focused clinicians and expand medication assisted treatment (MAT) and other services, while reducing patient wait times. Those outcomes derive from not only the model itself, but also the reimbursement that is provided, which has enabled New Jersey’s CCBHCs to add new staff positions. That expanded staff enabled New Jersey’s CCBHCs to serve 18,130 individuals in their first year of operation.

The seven CCBHCs have one dozen locations in Atlantic, Bergen, Burlington, Essex, Mercer, Middlesex and Monmouth Counties. While the majority of their clients come from their home counties, these CCBHCs have served individuals from seventeen counties (Atlantic, Bergen, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Essex, Gloucester, Hudson, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Monroe, Ocean, Passaic, Somerset, and Union).

In a February 2019 survey, those seven New Jersey CCBHCs reported that 143 of the 195 new hires in their CCBHCs will have to be let go if the demonstration is not extended beyond June 30, 2019. This includes psychiatrists and other prescribers, addiction specialists, case managers, peers and other staff. Subsequently, almost all new or expanded services will be reduced or cease.

The loss of 143 staff will be accompanied by severe reductions of almost all of the services that were newly added or expanded by the CCBHCs and discontinuance of others (see chart and table on back).

*New Jersey now has nine CCBHCs, though only seven are funded by the initial demonstration funding, with the additional two funded directly by one-time expansion grants appropriated in 2018.
As shown in the above table, four agencies would no longer provide ambulatory detoxification, the other three would see a reduction in those services; six CCBHCs would reduce their MAT services and one would cease those services altogether. All services will be affected. CCBHCs anticipate that over 600 individuals will no longer receive MAT services.

If the Excellence in Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Expansion Act (S. 824/H.R. 1767) is not passed to extend the CCBHC demonstration program beyond June 30, 2019, not only will many gains in fighting the opioid epidemic be lost, but a promising model of integrated care providing community mental health and collaborating to great effect with law enforcement, hospitals and other community institutions will disappear.