

**Responding to an Increased Demand for Services:
Options for Building Capacity**

**SAMHSA Grantee Meeting
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Use of Clinical Triage in the University Mental Health Service

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Key Elements of Triage System

- **Clinically based decision making**
- **Customer friendly orientation**
- **Ease of use**
- **Maximize efficiency**
- **Promotion of clinical discussion**

THE PROCESS

- **New director joins staff 6/95**
- **Individual meetings with all staff: near unanimity as to deficiency with current intake system**
- **Reaching consensus among staff**
- **Addressing resistance to change**
- **Proposal issued for discussion**
- **Staff mandate for change**
- **Multidisciplinary workgroup**

WORKGROUP PHASE

- **Active meetings begin**
- **Review of data-intakes, urgent care, on-call**
- **Triage protocols developed**
- **Levels of care**
- **Forms and documentation**
- **Specialized referrals**
- **Change in team model**
- **Presentation to staff**
- **Staff suggestions integrated**

IMPLEMENTATION

- **Program piloted 11/13-21/96**
- **Modifications made post-pilot**
- **Full implementation spring semester, 1997**

RESULTS

- **All new referrals offered clinical triage appointment same day**
- **Urgent slots available, offered directly during triage**
- **Urgent care walk-in clinic experiences immediate decline.**
- **Spring semester, 1996 (old system): 184 visits**
- **Spring semester, 1997 (new system): 39 visits**
- **Spring semester, 1998: 12 visits**
- **Summer 1998: eliminated**

Results (cont.)

- **Clinical matching takes place within intake teams**
- **High degree of satisfaction noted in community:**
- **consistent feedback from UMASS community about improved access**
- **Pt satisfaction survey 12/97 found 96.8% overall satisfaction with our services.**
- **Hiring of senior clinician, expert in crisis and triage, to take primary role in daily clinical triage.**

DIFFICULTIES

- **With increased access, increased flow**
- **Staff stress**
- **Possible increase in acuity**
- **Managing shifting demands**

ONGOING PROCESS

- **Workgroup has periodic meetings**
- **Refinements continue to be made**