



Behavioral Health System

Reform & Innovation

Mental health and substance use disorders are leading causes of mortality and morbidity in the United States, particularly among adolescents and young adults.

States, counties, and other local entities play a critical role in both preventing behavioral health disorders and ensuring a robust behavioral health treatment system. Through Medicaid and state budgets, states contribute at least 39% and 50% of funds toward mental health and substance use disorder treatments, respectively.¹ States are at the forefront of driving innovations in delivery and payment for mental health and addiction services—such as behavioral health homes, opioid hub-and-spoke delivery systems, and pay-for-performance models.

RTI International has more than 200 experts who have dedicated their careers to improving behavioral health. Our behavioral health experts include psychiatrists, behavioral health epidemiologists, economists, former behavioral health state officials, quality measurement experts, data analysts, and many other disciplines. This breadth and depth of understanding can help you throughout the life cycle of behavioral health system innovation—from policy development and implementation to evaluation.

¹Mark, TL, Yee, T, Levit, KR, Camacho-Cook, J, Cutler, E, Carroll, CD. Insurance Financing Increased For Mental Health Conditions But Not For Substance Use Disorders, 1986–2014. *Health Affairs*, 35(6), 958–65.



Needs Assessments. Understanding behavioral health information—where to get it and how to use it—is key to developing useful needs assessments. RTI has been collecting and analyzing data on behavioral health risk factors, prevalence rates, utilization, workforce, and provider supply for decades. We help states use these data for policy and program development, as well as for ongoing population and health system monitoring.

Project Examples

- RTI has designed, fielded, and analyzed the National Survey on Drug Use and Health—the main source of information on behavioral health prevalence rates—for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for the past 2 decades.
- We are partnering with North Carolina to develop behavioral health epidemiologic profiles and creating dynamic dashboards to display data in useful formats.

Policy Development. States and localities have many tools available to improve behavioral health systems. Policy should be developed with a clear understanding of the complexity of behavioral health funding, treatments for mental health and substance use disorders, and the variety of medical and social service systems that interact with behavioral health funding. Our experts have a deep understanding of Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance, block grants, and state funding to help states and localities determine how best to sustain policy and programmatic innovations. We also can provide cost-benefit analyses and simulations to help states understand the costs and benefits of different approaches.

Project Examples

- For the North Carolina legislature, we developed a simulation model to estimate the costs and benefits of alternative prison-based drug treatment scenarios.
- For Pennsylvania, we designed an Opioid Treatment Capacity Calculator to estimate how treatment capacity expansions will impact utilization and outcomes for opioid use disorder patients.

Implementation, Technical Assistance, and Training.

We partner with state officials to implement a range of behavioral health system, policy, and financing innovations to optimize outcomes for providers, payers, and patients. Many of our projects have helped states design and maintain behavioral health data systems.

Project Examples

- For SAMHSA's Performance Accountability and Reporting System, RTI is providing technical assistance and web-based training to help grantees—which are often state agencies—report to the federal government the outcomes of their grant-funded behavioral health programs.
- Under the Prevention of Prescription Abuse in the Workplace Technical Assistance Center, we offer technical support to U.S. employers related to the prevention of prescription drug abuse among U.S. employees and their families who are from diverse backgrounds, occupations, and industries.
- Under the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)'s Comprehensive Primary Care Plus (CPC+) initiative, we support approximately 3,000 practices with both our help desk and our payment operations; the CPC+ initiative is a national program that aims to strengthen primary care.

Evaluation. RTI conducts a wide variety of evaluations, from large multisite evaluations to local evaluations. We leverage both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques—including surveys, expert interviews, focus groups, and data analytics.

Project Examples

- Community efforts to make schools safer and increase access to mental health services
- Programs for screening and intervening with people who use harmful substances
- Programs providing services to people experiencing homelessness
- Programs to assist with outpatient treatment for individuals with a serious mental illness



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