

## **Merrimack County Human Services Navigator Case Manager**

Demographics:

Gender

- Female 54
- Male 52
- Unknown 0

Age

- 18-24: 8
- 25-64: 89
- 65+: 9
- Unknown: 0

Average days per client case: 72 Days

An analysis of the impact(s), successes and challenges of the project(s), program(s), and/or services funded:

Reporting time frames: August 1, 2023-April 7th 2024 and April 7, 2024 to June 30, 2024

During the time frame of April 7th-May 20th we experienced a staffing transition and a new staff member was hired and trained to be able to effectively gather this data and obtain a caseload.

In total since August 1, 2023, the Navigators worked with a total of 97 households. Of those, 8 households received services on two separate occasions. The Navigator worked with the households connecting them to resources including but not limited to SUD treatment, harm reduction agencies, non-profit agencies, medical providers, Social Security, DHHS, and housing agencies. The Navigator worked with households for an average of 106 days with the longest open case being 425 days. That particular household consisted of a low-income, unhoused individual with no support system or reliable transportation. The Navigator worked with non- profits,

state agencies, local government, and religious organizations to provide resources to the households the project served.

The Navigator was able to work with a particular household to request an emergency voucher through Concord Housing. The household was successful in being approved and was provided permanent appropriate housing.

The Navigator worked with many households on connecting them with services for Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) and Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and provided follow-up case management where applicable.

The challenges that the Navigators have encountered connecting people to those services are the following: lack of insurance, wait times to get into treatment and financial support for those who reside in recovery housing. One of the challenges for clients who are in recovery is that there is no inpatient access for registered sex offenders in New Hampshire. The second biggest obstacle is payment for recovery housing once a person completes treatment. Some agencies have funding to pay for 30 days of recovery housing, but after that the person is responsible and if they are without income they lose access to the basic need of shelter. Local welfare departments are not able to assist with rental payments as they do not define recovery housing as permanent housing.

The Navigators have been successful in using SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) to get households approved for Social Security. The SOAR program provides the Navigator the capability to meet homeless households where they are at and expedite the process to apply for SSI/SSDI. A significant barrier to households with OUD and SUD is access to communication. The Navigators work with households to get free phones and service through the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and Lifeline. A major challenge is when people don't have permanent residence they can lose their phone and if not sheltered they have minimal access to charge their phones. Other types of communication can slow down the process or have been proven to be ineffective. Some households use local resource centers to get their mail and others have PO Boxes as far as 70 miles from where they are currently staying. An option provided to households was USPS General

Delivery. This is where the Post Office will hold mail without cost for up to a year. When applying for benefits there is an expectation of a response within 10 days or a denial letter will be sent.

Housing and access to subsidized housing for clients with a history of OUD or SUD is one of the biggest challenges the Navigator has come across.

Households with criminal history connected to SUD prevent access to housing vouchers and if the person is working it is difficult to be approved for an apartment because of their criminal history. A majority of the longer-term households on the Navigators caseload are in need of permanent housing. The most unrecognized challenge working with this population is the need for affordable dentures.

Medicaid provides access to dental care, but you have to meet specific criteria for dentures. The low-cost program is approximately \$2,000 for a full set, making it unaffordable to most.

While there are many challenges, the Navigator Program has been successful in connecting households with resources including but not limited to: treatment programs, access to harm reduction, employment, local, state and federal benefits, housing, connections to community non-profit organizations, and fast-tracking Medicaid through DHHS.

Created by M.C 4/8/2024 and updated by K.B on 07/29/2024