

One of the more prevalent chronic conditions in depression in older adults or people with disabilities. People who are depressed often have trouble getting mobilizing to attend outpatient services. Currently it is only possible to provide home based mental health services to a Medicare recipient unless they meet very stringent criteria. I would propose widening the criteria to include serious depression. Use of a score on the PHQ-9 would be one way of creating a clear criteria. Perhaps a score over 10. We tried to provide a mobile service with a licensed social worker to serve older adults with serious depression. The program was very successful but we could not bill Medicare given the very narrow criteria.

Another change would be to expand the type of licensed providers to include licensed professional counselors. There is a shortage of licensed clinical social workers and we do not have enough LCSW's to serve the older adult population. Broadening the provider panel will make it easier to assign a licensed professional with a shorter time period for the initial assessment. Having a broader possible selection of providers will make it easier to match the specific needs of the older adult the specific skills of the different staff in our agency. In our area, we are the only mental health agencies that accept Medicare given the rigid rules around provider qualifications. There are times that I only have one LCSW for a location out of an array of 5 – 9 staff. This causes many problems.

Stephen Christian-Michaels
President and Chief Executive Officer
Family Services of Western Pa.
3230 William Pitt Way
Pittsburgh, Pa 15238
(412) 820-2050 x438
(412) 820-2024 Fax
Administrative Assistant, Jean Donatelli, ext. 442



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