

Rural Affinity Group  
Identification of Issues to Address in Serving Consumers Who Live in Rural Areas

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Identified Issues

1. While there are services in rural areas, there are no services for people with higher levels of need.
2. Could Medicaid Personal Care be used for peer support?
3. Less-populated counties have trouble competing for grants due to several problems:
  - often there isn't enough staff time to undertake writing complex proposals
  - proposals may not appear to be as "solid" as proposals from urban areas because in rural areas there may not be many supporting agencies/partners.
  - the number of clients/consumers may be small. Therefore, proposals aren't as impressive as those from urban areas where large numbers of people will be served.
4. Some landlords live out of town far away and are difficult to contact or deal with when maintenance or other problems arise
5. There are issues of rural culture that need to be addressed
  - Some in rural areas are averse to dealing with government as well as government paperwork and regulations.
  - Some consumers because of their past behaviors may be unwelcome in the community and find it difficult to secure the natural and peer supports that they could find in urban areas (although the opposite may also be true: if a community embraces a consumer, she/he may find it easier to locate people who will offer support. Rural communities may be more easily mobilized.)
  - It may be necessary to deal with prejudices and stereotypes about people who have mental illnesses.
6. It is difficult to adequately staff services/programs in rural areas when there are only a few people to serve. There may not be enough client/hours needed to justify serving an area or enough hours to overcome fixed costs. In addition, staff may have to take on a variety of roles some of which they might not be capable of fulfilling or might find overwhelming.
7. Transportation may be limited or even non-existent. Rural residents may find it especially difficult to get to treatment programs and appointments, and may have very limited employment opportunities.
8. Although not limited to rural areas, there is a significant problem of older youth coming out JRA facilities and foster care. At the very least, there is a need for 3-month step-down programs of transitional housing. In urban areas it is possible to set up shared housing that the residents pay for but in rural areas there may not be enough young people to support such an option. In addition, there might still be problems providing sufficient staff support.
9. What are the consequences of forcing people who have lived in rural settings to move to urban areas where they know no one because it is their only place where they can get services and treatment?