Financing and Sustainability of American Indian and Alaska Native Systems of Care

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Holly Echo-Hawk & Carolyn Lichtenstein
Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Inc.

Anna Krivelyova
Macro International Inc.

Tribal System of Care Communities

• 15 American Indian and Alaska Native (Tribal) communities funded from 1994 to 2006

• Distinct and unique cultures, history, and approaches to financial sustainability

• Located in 11 States: Alaska, California, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, Michigan, Maine

National Evaluation
Tribal Financing Study

• Exploratory Description of Financing and Sustainability in American Indian and Alaska Native System of Care Communities

• 2-year study funded by SAMHSA’s Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS)

• Conducted by the national evaluation of the Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program (CMH)

• Organized approach to examining the Tribal financial sustainability experiences

American Indian and Alaska Native System of Care Communities

Study Questions

• What are the financing opportunities and challenges experienced by the alumni and currently funded Tribal systems of care?

• What are the economic, infrastructure, leadership, social and/or cultural issues that impact the implementation of financing strategies?

Study Approach

• Descriptive information was collected from the 15 Tribal systems of care

• Project directors, fiscal managers, and governing board members shared their financing stories

• Site visits were held with 5 sites: Urban Indian, rural reservation (2), Alaska, Oklahoma

• Deeper discussions were held with project directors, governing board members, fiscal managers, State behavioral health and/or Medicaid reps
Study Findings

- Tribal systems of care face serious challenges in long-term sustainability
- Financing of Tribal systems of care is complicated for many reasons, including...
  - lack of financial resources in remote communities
  - impact of Tribal–State history on the willingness and ability to pursue financial partnerships
  - lack of knowledge by potential funding sources of advantages of Tribal partnerships

Challenges for Financial Sustainability

Tribal respondents reported that . . .

- Recognizing the impact of colonialism and historical trauma on the Tribal community’s ability to plan was an essential first step in breaking non-productive planning cycles
- Tribal sustainability efforts are impacted by multiple government negotiations (Federal, State, Tribal, county levels)
  - Confusion over who is responsible for Tribal services
  - Significant investment of time is needed to educate funding sources about Tribal services
  - Tribal–State relationships varied by State, often for historical reasons

Challenges for Financial Sustainability (cont.)

- Securing non-Federal match dollars, even if eligible Tribes and Tribal organizations are exempt from using Federal funds
- Mobilizing services to meet a community’s immediate needs often takes precedence over strengthening Tribal infrastructure
- Remote locations impact everything from fund availability to Internet connectivity (which has implications for timely billing)

Areas of Success in Achieving Financial Sustainability

- Historical mistrust of data collection was replaced by Tribal use of their data as part of Tribal nation-building
- Clinical and Traditional Practice Integration required helping funders recognize the value of culture-based practices and improved outcomes
- Medicaid access was advantageous for some Tribes (e.g., 100% FMAP rate)

National Evaluation Sustainability Study

- Purpose of the study is to assess grant communities’ ability to sustain key system of care components beyond the Federal grant period
- Web survey is conducted with all system of care communities at various points both during and after their grant

Sustainability Study Analysis

- Six Tribal communities; 22 respondents
- 40 non-Tribal communities; 135 respondents
- Tribal communities’ responses compared to non-Tribal communities’ responses
- Outcomes included General Sustainability Strategies and Specific Financing Strategies
**General Strategies for Tribal Sustainability**

- Most commonly used strategies:
  - Cultivating strong interagency relationships
  - Involving stakeholders
  - Providing training to Tribal leaders on the system of care approach
  - Generating political and policy-level support
  - Building strong family organizations

- Least used strategy:
  - Making policy/regulatory changes

**Tribal General Strategies**

- Most frequently used strategies:
  - Operating more efficiently through cutting costs
  - Leveraging funding sources
  - Increasing Medicaid charging ability

- Least used strategies:
  - Administrative claiming
  - De-categorizing funding streams
  - Charging fees for service
  - Creating new revenue

**Tribal Financing Strategies**

- Least used strategies:
  - Creating new revenue
  - Charging fees for service
  - De-categorizing funding streams
  - Administrative claiming

- Most frequently used strategies:
  - Operating more efficiently through cutting costs
  - Leveraging funding sources
  - Increasing Medicaid charging ability

**Significant Differences Between Tribal and Non-Tribal Communities in General Strategy Use**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Strategy</th>
<th>Tribals</th>
<th>Non-Tribals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobilizing Resources</td>
<td>81.9</td>
<td>88.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Evaluation Results</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>86.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing Training on SOC</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>89.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involving Stakeholders</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating an Advocacy Base for SOC</td>
<td>91.1</td>
<td>85.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infusing SOC into Broader System</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>86.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of respondents = 157

**Tribal Financing Strategies (cont.)**

- Most frequently used strategies:
  - Operating more efficiently through cutting costs
  - Leveraging funding sources
  - Increasing Medicaid charging ability

- Least used strategies:
  - Administrative claiming
  - De-categorizing funding streams
  - Charging fees for service
  - Creating new revenue
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### Significant Differences Between Tribal and Non-Tribal Communities in Financing Strategy Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Tribal Conn. (%)</th>
<th>Non-Tribal Conn. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reinvesting Funds (p=.06)</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining New/Increased State Funds (p=.00)</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>59.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Claiming (p=.05)</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pooling/Blending Funds (p=.007)</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinating Categorical Funds (p=.06)</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>55.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charging Fees for Services (p=.05)</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of respondents = 74

### Effectiveness of Tribal Community Strategies

- General strategies used most frequently were perceived as being at least moderately effective.
- More than 80% of respondents reported using cost-cutting as a financing strategy, but 82% felt it was only somewhat or moderately effective.
- 78% of those who reported using the strategy of "leveraging funding sources (including Medicaid)" thought it was no more than moderately effective.

### Tribal Financing Strategies with Moderate or Less Success

- Although 67% of respondents reported attempting to obtain Medicaid reimbursement for services, 90% thought these efforts were no more than moderately effective.
- Strategies used least often were also perceived as least effective by those who used them (e.g., administrative claiming, de-categorizing funding streams).

### Tribal Behavioral Health Financing Challenges

- Funding source knowledge gaps about Tribal sovereignty and Tribal political structures.
- Historical trauma impacts Tribal community’s ability to come together for productive sustainability planning.
- Historical trauma affects interest of Tribes to develop a working relationship with the State or county.

### Tribal Behavioral Health Financing Challenges

- Tribal infrastructures (e.g., computer technology, finance and billing systems, human resources) are critical to the implementation of sustainability plans but are under-developed in many communities.
- Matching fund requirements (cost sharing) remain a significant challenge in communities with limited resources.

### Tribal Financing Stages...

- Stages of Tribal Financing...
Study Findings: Future Implications

• Finance-focused training and TA
• Broader dissemination of best practices in Tribal–State partnership development
• Peer-to-peer learning opportunities on
  – Tribal accreditation
  – Tribal–State agreements
  – Tribal–Medicaid negotiations
  – third-party billing systems
  – other finance-related topics

Summary

• Tribal communities also have a need for...
  - Broader dissemination of best practices in Tribal financing strategies
  - Models of Tribal–State partnerships that resulted in win–win financing strategies
  - Tribal accreditation
  - Tribal–State agreements
  - Tribal Medicaid negotiations

For More Information

Holly Echo-Hawk
Vancouver, WA
Phone: 360.571.3203
echohawk@pacifier.com

Carolyn Lichtenstein
Rockville, MD
Phone: 301.881.2590
clichtenstein@wrma.com