

IMPROVING AFRICAN-AMERICAN RETENTION IN SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

A series of educational products, guidance, and technical assistance for mental health providers, substance abuse treatment providers and primary care physicians who seek to elevate cultural competence efforts to include an understanding of the presence and impact of implicit racial bias in health care and substance abuse treatment.

TOPICS:

Scope of the Problem

What it Means to be African-American

Implicit Bias and Microaggression

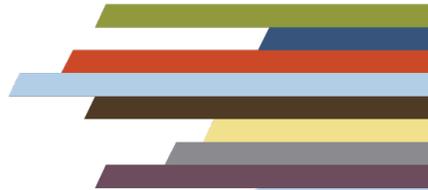
Evidence-Based Strategies

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Southeast (HHS Region 4)

ATTC Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration



IMPROVING AFRICAN-AMERICAN RETENTION IN SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

Evidence-Based Strategies

For Mental Health Providers



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INTRODUCTION

Retention in substance abuse treatment is a significant predictor of substance abuse health outcomes. Early drop-out has been linked to relapse to drug and alcohol use and poorer long-term prognosis.

African-American race has been shown to be an independent predictor of early treatment drop-out, with some studies showing dropout rates as high as five times that of individuals who identify as Caucasian.

There is a growing motivation to implement evidence-based interventions with the goal of reducing low retention rates among African-Americans receiving substance abuse treatment.

This pamphlet focuses on evidence-based interventions that have been demonstrated to reduce the negative impact of implicit bias on healthcare outcomes. Systemic, organizational, and individual perspectives are presented.

SYSTEMIC STRATEGIES

Mental health treatment systems that commit to cultural competence as an ongoing dynamic process demonstrate improved outcomes. Systems should aim to support ongoing competence in each of the following:



Cultural Sensitivity

- appreciation, respect and comfort for the cultural diversity of clients



Cultural Knowledge

- understanding about different beliefs, values, and behavior of clients



Cultural Skill

- ability to collect and incorporate relevant cultural data into care planning

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES

Organizational interventions for improving African-American retention in substance abuse treatment programs rely on commitment to race-specific continuous quality improvement efforts. At minimum, mental health treatment organizations who provide and/or refer to substance abuse treatment services should collect, analyze and enact change based on the following race-specific data:

- number of referrals
- access to services including wait-time and other barriers
- provision of race-specific support including addressing race-related trauma, implicit bias and macroaggressions
- client satisfaction

INDIVIDUAL STRATEGIES

Individual interventions center on increasing self-awareness of implicit bias among mental health treatment clinicians, managers, administrators and executives. Studies repeatedly show that higher levels of implicit bias lead to lower quality of care. In keeping with recovery principles, the first step is recognizing we have a problem. Mental health treatment providers must be aware of implicit bias and be motivated to address it. Reducing individual implicit bias may change referral patterns and increase client's willingness to accept and follow through on referrals.

Implicit Association Test (IAT) has been used in research to understand implicit cognition – those thought process of which a person has no conscious awareness. Mental health professionals who are motivated to improve African-American retention in substance abuse treatment can quantify their level of implicit bias by taking an IAT online for free at www.projectimplicit.net.

Many Cognitive-Behavioral strategies can be used to address individual implicit bias:

