

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)

ACT is a form of Psychosocial Rehabilitation that is an integral part of many individual's recovery. The best way to conceptualize ACT is to think of it as intensive case management that provides 24 hour support for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. ACT usually targets consumers that are high users of the system such as those with multiple hospitalizations, frequent crises, or lack of housing and other supports. ACT teams have been shown to reduce hospitalization, increase housing stability, decrease psychiatric symptoms and improve customer and family satisfaction.

ACT consists of teams that include a part time physician, a nurse, and case managers. There may also be substance abuse specialists and vocational rehabilitation specialists peer support specialists that are attached to the team. The team has a ratio of 10 to 15 patients per staff member.

The team provides 24/7 services that are tailored to the person's needs. They provide one stop shopping and most services are provided by the team rather than by multiple providers. Services are delivered in the community where the person is rather than in an office. The treatment is very individualized and is customized as to the person's wishes and desires.

There have been over 20 controlled studies that have shown that ACT decreases hospitalization, decreases symptoms, increases housing, and increases quality of life. In some studies ACT has been shown to reduce arrests and time spent in jail. Employment has not been a goal of ACT in the past and therefore increased employment has not been shown in studies when compared to other forms of case management. But, more recently ACT teams have incorporated work specialists into the teams with the goal that ACT will have a positive impact on employment.

Some ACT teams are targeting subpopulations of consumers with SPMI such as people caught up in the legal system and/or who have substance abuse problems. The research appears promising in these areas.

Please review the North Carolina service definition for ACT and the NAMI National Program Standards for ACT Teams that appear on this website for a more detailed description of ACT.

Currently, ACT is provided by Mental Health Association of North Carolina and is available in all five counties covered by the PBH waiver.

Referrals to ACT can be made through a provider such as a Comprehensive Community Provider or by calling the PBH Access number 1-800-939-5911.