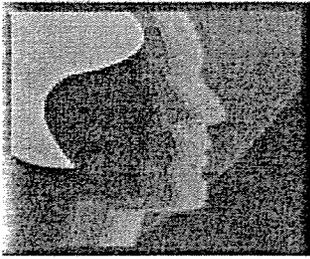


HHSC - Issue 9 - NorthStar



APAA

Association of Persons Affected by Addiction

11/13/2014

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The Association of Persons Affected by Addiction (APAA) is leading a Recovery Community Support Organization that encourages and support personal recovery by offering peer to peer assistance in providing community services that help support recover, reduce relapse, and promote high-level wellness in individuals, their families and the community . APAA has been a NorthStar Peer Provider since 2007.

APAA is concerned that the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission's staff report on HHSC issue 9 recommends discontinuing the NorthSTAR system. NorthStar system of care has time and again demonstrated that it can provide quality mental health and substance use disorder treatment and services in a cost-effective manner.

Yes, like any health care system, there is always room for improvement. But instead of "throwing the baby out with the bathwater," I strongly urge you to keep all that is good with the program and let local leaders, stakeholders and NorthSTAR join together to build an enhanced model that preserves what works and develop improvements, where needed.

The fact of the matter is that NorthSTAR succeeds, where many programs fall short. Look at some of its many achievements.

- **Access** – Since its inception in 1999, it is the only region in Texas that has never had a waiting list for mental health or substance use disorder services.
- **Public-Private Partnership that promotes consumer choice and quality care** – There is full range of providers at every point of the continuum of care including APAA, a peer lead, peer ran and peer driving recovery community organization. The more than 350 providers that comprise the NorthSTAR network have a proud entrepreneurial spirit that that has supported not only quality of care but innovations in care that have allowed the NorthSTAR model to evolve and mature.
- **Innovation** – Over the past 15 years, NorthSTAR has continued to adapt, innovate and change to best meet the needs of beneficiaries and providers, alike. In fact, since its inception, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and the Department of State Health Services have repeatedly come to NorthSTAR to



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pilot innovative initiatives. Most recently, it consulted with the state and county partners to develop Ebola quarantine counseling and services.

- **Cost Effectiveness** – The cost of providing mental health care per person under the NorthSTAR system in 2014 is approximately \$1,587 annually, compared to an average cost of \$3684 person annually in the rest of the state.
- **Blended Funding** – By combining federal, state and local funding sources, treatment decisions are based on clinical needs and not the funding stream. **The NorthSTAR member does not have understand or navigate a complicated system to access care. They just have to ask for help from any NorthSTAR provider and they are enrolled in a program that best suits their needs. In essence, there is “no wrong door” to access the system.** While the Sunset Commission staff report appears to indicate that this funding arrangement is problematic, NorthSTAR's 1915b Medicaid waiver has been renewed every two years since its inception 15 years ago, most recently in May of this year.
- **Accountability** – Public quarterly reports show that outcomes for NorthSTAR members have been in the top 15% of the state of Texas.