

# GE-NMF PCLP Community Project

## MENTAL HEALTH INTEGRATION PROGRAM AT NORTHEAST COMMUNITY CLINIC:

A PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDENT'S EXPERIENCES  
IN DEVELOPING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR  
A FEDERALLY QUALIFIED HEALTH CENTER

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Externship Site: Northeast Community Clinic, Los Angeles, CA

Site Mentor: Dr. Christopher Lau

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Kevin Loheny

Start and End Dates: July 16 – August 21, 2012

# Introduction

- PAS-III at Midwestern University in Glendale, AZ
- Originally from Fremont, CA (San Francisco Bay Area)
- Completed undergraduate education at UCLA
  - Wanted to return to help underserved populations in Los Angeles



# Why I Chose this Topic

- My original project idea of organizing a bone marrow registry drive was too constricted.
  - ▣ Would not benefit NECC's patient population
- Mental health is one of my professional interests.
- Wanted to see how programs for federally qualified health centers (FQHC) are developed.
- Wanted to learn more about the business and administrative side of medicine.
- NECC wanted to roll this project out soon.

# Background: U.S. and California

## According to Healthy People:

- In 2004, 1 in 4 adults had a mental illness in the past year, and 1 in 17 had a serious mental illness (SMI).
  - Serious mental illness – a condition listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) that has persisted for at least 12 months and causes significant impairment in the patient's life
- Multiple studies have shown a link between a patient's mental health and his physical health.

## According to the National Alliance on Mental Health (for CA):

- In 2006, 3,334 people committed suicide.
- As of 2010, 3.19% of adults are living with SMIs.
- In 2010, California's mental health services were only meeting the needs of 34% of adults living with SMIs.

# Background: Los Angeles County

California Health Interview Survey Data for Los Angeles County				
	Federal Poverty Level			
	0-99%	100-199%	200-299%	300+%
Likely has had serious psychological distress during past year	10.5%	8.8%	7.3%	5.3%
Severe work impairment past 12 months	10.3%*	3.2%	3.4%	4.3%
Needed help for emotional/mental health problems or use of alcohol/drug	16.6%	12.8%	15.9%	16.2%
Has taken prescription medicine for emotional/mental health issue in past year	11.9%	6.9%	9.6%	9.2%
Had difficulties/delays getting mental health care	6.8%	4.8%	6.5%	5.0%
Received emergency room care for emotional/mental issues during past year	12.0%	10.5%	7.8%	4.6%
Mental health treatment covered by insurance	61.0%	68.0%	88.7%	83.9%

\*Statistically unstable.

# Methods



**Healthy Way LA**  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

- I read *many* government documents about LA County's low-income health program, called Healthy Way LA (HWLA).
- HWLA partnered with LA County's Department of Mental Health to implement a Mental Health Integration Program (MHIP).
- The MHIP will offer mental health services in a tiered structure based on the patient's symptom severity and eligibility criteria.
- NECC needs a new internal program to accommodate new HWLA mental health patients.

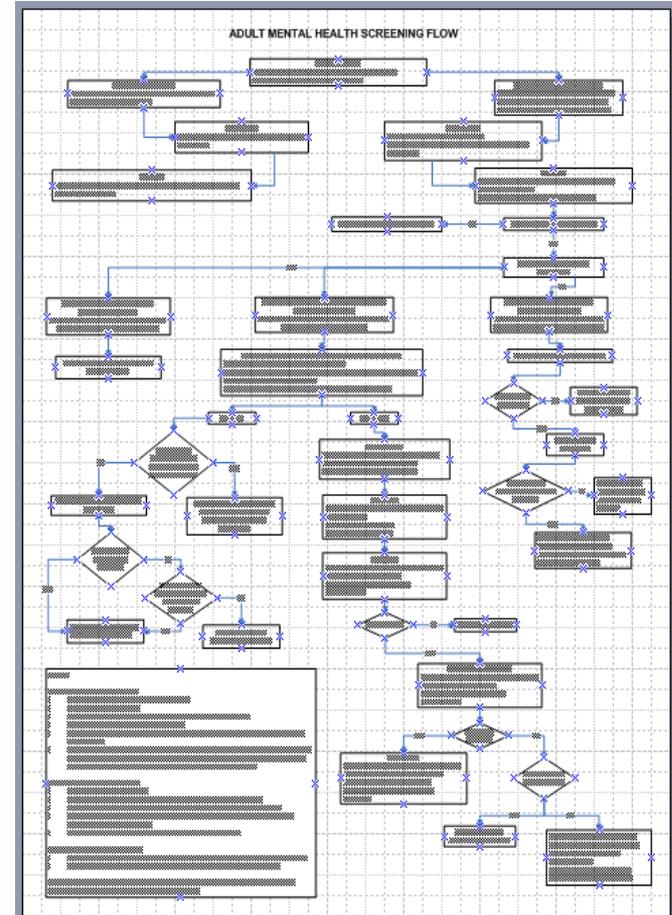


# Methods

- I worked primarily with Bernard Carrillo, a physician assistant at the clinic who also doubles as the Clinic Services Administrator.
- Screening forms: PHQ 9, GAD 7, MDQ, PCL C
  - ▣ Picked questions from each one to make CMAP, NECC's Comprehensive Mental Assessment Plan
  - ▣ Positive responses on CMAP triggered need for patient to fill out more specific forms to screen for specific mental disorders

# Methods

- Workflow algorithm
  - ▣ Very time consuming
  - ▣ First time working with Microsoft Visio
  - ▣ Needed for all NECC treatment plans
- Policies and Procedures
  - ▣ Also very time consuming
  - ▣ Also needed for all NECC treatment plans



# Conclusions and Future Plans

- Administrative work for large organizations like NECC (11 clinic sites) is very time consuming and detail oriented.
- County contracts are difficult to process and very bureaucratic.
- There are still many factors to consider before the MHIP can be rolled out at NECC, including:
  - ▣ Hiring new counselors (LCSW)
  - ▣ Contracting psychiatrists and other mental health services providers
  - ▣ Develop billing processes
  - ▣ Explain new program to medical providers and LCSWs

# Recommendations to Future Scholars

- No “results” in the traditional sense because I did not collect any data.
  - Would have liked to see how many patients would be referred to mental health services to see if the CMAP screening tool is valuable and yields a high referral count.
- If I were to redo this project, I would choose a program that is already in existence so I could collect data.
- However, I still learned a tremendous amount about county policies, FQHC administration, using new software, and designing new programs.
- I greatly enjoyed my experience and am extremely grateful for the opportunity!

# Acknowledgements

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- Dr. Kevin Lohenry, my faculty advisor