Recommendations to Strengthen the Mental Health and Substance Use Workforce for Older Adults

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María P. Aranda, PhD, MSW

University of Southern California
Member of the Committee on the Mental Health Workforce for Geriatric Populations, IOM Board on Health Care Services
Federal Coordination

Congress should direct the Secretary of HHS to designate a responsible entity for coordinating federal efforts to develop and strengthen the nation’s geriatric MH/SU workforce (e.g., National Health Care Workforce Commission)
Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

The Secretary of HHS should ensure that its agencies - including AoA, AHRQ, CMS, HRSA, NIDA, NIMH, and SAMHSA - assume responsibility for building the capacity and facilitating the deployment of the MH/SU workforce for older Americans
HHS (Cont’d)

CMS should:

• Evaluate methods for reimbursing care managers and the supervising MH/SU specialists
• Evaluate methods for deploying personnel in Community Mental Health Centers to provide older adults’ primary care and chronic disease self-management
• Explore ways to use QIOs to improve care delivery to older adults with MH/SU conditions
• Enforce PASRR and the MDS rules for assessing nursing home residents’ mental health. These assessments should inform residents’ care plans and nursing home personnel should implement the care plans accordingly
HHS (Cont’d)

HRSA should:

• Devote sufficient attention to geriatric MH/SU through the National Center for Health Care Workforce Analysis
• Ensure that Geriatric Academic Career Awards career development awards include geriatric MH/SU specialists
• Fund programs that train individuals in geriatric MH/SU care through the Geriatric Education Centers and the Comprehensive Geriatric Education Program institutional awards
NIMH should:

- Support research on methods for increasing the capacity of the MH/SU workforce to provide competent and effective care for older adults in the community, nursing homes, or other congregate residential settings
HHS (Cont’d)

SAMHSA should:

- Devote sufficient attention to the capacity of the behavioral health workforce to provide geriatric MH/SU services
- Restore funding of the Older Adult Mental Health Targeted Capacity Expansion Grant program
- Require that states receiving MH/SU block grants document and report how the funds are used to support local capacity to serve older adults
ACA Workforce Provisions

Congress should fund training, scholarship, and loan forgiveness provisions of the ACA for individuals who work with or are preparing to work with older adults who have MH/SU conditions. Funding should target programs with geriatric MH/SU curricula.
Data Collection and Reporting

HHS should direct a coordinating entity to develop and coordinate data collection and reporting for geriatric MH/SU workforce planning, such as:

- Prevalence data
- Use of MH/SU services
- Information on the geriatric MH/SU workforce, including demographics, training and certification, and areas of practice
For Further Info

Jill Eden, IOM Study
Director: jeden@nas.edu

Dan G. Blazer, MD
Dan.g.blazer@duke.edu

Michael A. Hoge, PhD
Michael.hoge@yale.edu

Maria P. Aranda, PhD, LCSW
aranda@usc.edu

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