

Assertive Community Treatment

Implementation Resource Kit



DRAFT VERSION
2003

Information for Families and Other Supporters

What is assertive community treatment?

Assertive community treatment is a way of delivering a full range of services to people who have been diagnosed with a severe mental illness such as schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, or bipolar disorder. The goal of assertive community treatment is to keep people out of the hospital and help them to have a life that isn't dominated by having a mental illness. People who experience persistent and severe symptoms and have severe difficulties with basic, everyday things such as staying safe, caring for their physical needs, keeping safe and adequate housing, and working, may benefit from an assertive community treatment program.

How is assertive community treatment different from other services?

Team approach to service delivery

An assertive community treatment team is made up of practitioners who have training and experience in psychiatry, nursing, social work, substance abuse treatment, and employment. Rather than sending people to different agencies or providers for services, members of the team work closely together to provide individuals with a highly integrated array of services that best meet their needs.

Low staff-to-consumer ratio

One reason that ACT teams can provide personalized services is that teams only work with a relatively small group of people. Typically, there is about one team member for each 10 people receiving services. Because an ACT team has a small staff-to-consumer ratio, team members get to really know the individuals they're working with and can closely monitor how they're doing.

Services are provided where they are needed

Most of the services provided by an ACT team are provided in the community. That means that services are provided in people's homes, where they work, and in other settings in the community where problems occur or support is needed.

Services are provided when they are needed

The team meets frequently, often daily, to discuss how things are going. So if changes need to be made in the type of services someone is getting or how often they are getting those services, those changes can be made quickly. If a person needs a lot of help and support, team members will be in touch with the person as many times each day as necessary. Services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week so someone is always available to handle emergencies whenever they arise. Because of the team's ongoing involvement and the team's ability to quickly change the amount and type of services someone receives, emergencies can often be avoided.

Uninterrupted care

Several members of the team work with each person on a regular basis. If a team member goes on vacation or leaves, the services a person is receiving are not interrupted and they don't have to start at the beginning with someone new. There are always team members who know each individual who can carry on if a team member leaves.

Time-unlimited support

ACT teams make a long-term commitment to individuals. Teams provide whatever services and supports an individual may need for as long as they are needed. As individuals progress toward their recovery goals, team members are in touch less often but continue to be available if a need for additional support arises.

Areas in which assertive community treatment teams provide assistance

Daily Activities

- ▷ Grocery shopping and cooking
- ▷ Purchasing and caring for clothing
- ▷ Using transportation

Family Life

- ▷ Crisis management
- ▷ Counseling and psychoeducation for family members
- ▷ Coordination with child welfare and family service agencies
- ▷ Supporting people in carrying out their roles as parents

Housing Assistance

- ▷ Finding suitable housing
- ▷ Helping negotiate leases and pay rent
- ▷ Purchasing and repairing household items
- ▷ Developing relationships with landlords
- ▷ Improving housekeeping skills

Financial Management

- ▷ Planning a budget
- ▷ Troubleshooting financial problems e.g., disability payments
- ▷ Assisting with bills
- ▷ Increasing independence in money management

Counseling

- ▷ Oriented toward problem solving
- ▷ Built into all activities
- ▷ Goals addressed by all team members
- ▷ Includes development of illness management skills

Health

- ▷ Education to prevent health problems
- ▷ Medical screening
- ▷ Scheduling routine visits
- ▷ Linking people with medical providers for acute care
- ▷ Sex education and counseling on reproductive health

Medication Support

- ▷ Ordering medications from pharmacies
- ▷ Delivering medications, if needed
- ▷ Educating consumers about medications
- ▷ Reminding individuals to take medications
- ▷ Monitoring side effects
- ▷ Work Opportunities
- ▷ Educating employers about serious mental illness
- ▷ Help preparing for employment
- ▷ Help finding and keeping employment
- ▷ Employment support

Entitlements

- ▷ Assisting with applications
- ▷ Accompanying consumers to entitlement offices
- ▷ Managing food stamps if needed
- ▷ Assisting with redetermination of benefits

Substance Abuse Treatment

- ▷ Substance abuse treatment provided directly by team members

Social and family relationships

How do families benefit?

With the consent of the person being treated, an ACT team uses a variety of supportive and educational methods to help families develop strategies for supporting their loved one's recovery. Team members can also provide practical assistance with many things that family members may have been doing (e.g., shopping, laundry, money management, medication administration). Because the number of times people are seen during the day can be easily adjusted when necessary, ACT teams can provide the necessary support and assistance people need to move out of the family home and live safely in their own residence. ACT teams also provide a range of services to meet the needs of women who are pregnant and to help individuals fulfill their parenting responsibilities.

Is assertive community treatment effective?

There has been a lot of research done comparing assertive community treatment to case management. What studies show is that people who received assertive community treatment were less likely to be hospitalized and were more likely to have stable housing. Studies also show that people who receive assertive community treatment and their family members find it more satisfying than case management programs.

How can I find out more about assertive community treatment?

Where can I get information about other ACT resource kits?

Evidence Based Practices Implementation Website

www.mentalhealthpractices.org

National Assertive Community Treatment Technical Assistance Center

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
2107 Wilson Blvd, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201-3042
(866) 229 -6264
elizabeth@nami.org
www.nami.org/about/PACT.htm

Assertive Community Treatment Association (ACTA)

Assertive Community Treatment Association, Inc.
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Brighton Michigan 48116
(810) 227-1859
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Helpful Books

“Assertive Community Treatment of Persons with Severe Mental Illness” by L. Stein & A. Santos, Norton Publishers

www.wwnorton.com

“PACT Model of Community-Based Treatment for Persons with Severe and Persistent Mental Illness: A Manual for PACT Start-up” by D. Allness & W. Knoedler, NAMI

www.nami.org
(866) 229-6264

Videos

“Assertive Community Treatment” (A Brief Introduction to ACT), Duke University, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences

toolkit video

“Never Too Far” (describes an ACT program in a rural community), Duke University, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences

pasip001@mc.duke.edu
919 684-3332

“Consumers Talk About ACT” (interviews with individuals who receive ACT services), Duke University, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences

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