STRENGTHENING THE CARRYING CAPACITY OF LOCAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES TO ABSORB INCREASED HOSPITAL AND CLINICAL REFERRALS

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Increased Screening on the Social Determinants of Health

Current System

Community Carrying Capacity

60%

70%

20%

90%

40%
What is carrying capacity?
Questions of Interest

• What kinds of resources and services does the nonprofit sector provide to changing health systems?
• What is the impact on the carrying capacity of the nonprofit sector as health systems’ dependence on the system increases?
Community Partners

Both utilize shared space to house community-based organizations

Identified as primary referral sources for patients who need support for unmet social needs
Study Design

• Mixed-methods case studies
  • Key-informant interviews to understand the communities and referral process
  • Social network analysis to map the community network and gather granular data on relationships
  • Quantitative data analysis to measure the impact network has on carrying capacity
Key Informant Interviews

- Purposive sample of medical system, public health system, government, and community agencies
  - 24 interviews, 15 in Sarasota and 9 in Denton
- Structured interview guide
  - Organizational background
  - Focus on the social determinants of health
  - Referral process for addressing unmet social needs
  - Carrying capacity in the community
  - Innovative examples and strategies being used in the community
  - Collaboration
Analytic Approach

• Grounded theory
• Coded as a team of five
• Implemented team checks to ensure inter-rater reliability in the coding
• Data were examined to:
  • Better understand the process to address social determinants of health through referrals
  • Identify factors that contribute to carrying capacity
Four Major Themes Identified

• Focus on the Social Determinants of Health
• The Screening, Referral, and Follow-up Process
• Improving Carrying Capacity
• Challenges
Focus on the Social Determinants of Health

“Social determinants of health is just a fancy term to look at the needs of the whole person”

- Using social determinant of health terminology was generally, but not universally, familiar to the interviewees
- Activities of community-based organizations are frequently directed at addressing harmful determinants, but are not necessarily framed in such a way
The Screening, Referral, and Follow-up Process

“Hospitals are "less holistic", there isn’t a realization of what happens when they make those referrals- The follow up is not done, it’s not a complete loop”

- Need low barriers for entry
- Coordination is critical
- Follow up after referral presents major challenges
- Linking with clinical partners identified as significant barriers in the process
Improving Carrying Capacity

“demonstrating Return on Investment (ROI)”
“evidence-based programming”
“performance-based measurement”

- Strong belief that carrying capacity can be bolstered when activities and funding follow results
- Strengthening the availability and sharing of data on individuals receiving services and organization
- Systems perspective and collaboration
Challenges

“I'm going all these meetings where the health systems are talking about sending people to the community, and I don't think they have any clue what they mean.”

• Lack of time and resources
• Service coordination and collaboration
• Helping individuals navigate the system of care
• The role of local hospitals and other clinical organizations
Conclusions and Next Steps

- Community organizations want to address unmet social needs through a referral system, but met with factors that complicate the process
  - Complex system
  - Ineffective or absent tools for referral tracking and follow-up
  - Misalignment with clinical partners
  - Lack of resources in community-based organizations
- Inefficiencies and challenges converge to impact carrying capacity
Conclusions and Next Steps

• Social network analysis to further map the system
• Collection of carrying capacity data
• Combination of finance, organizational, partner, and community data
• Test whether collaborative approaches will be the most effective mechanisms to improve carrying capacity of the nonprofit/public sector
Questions?

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