Social Work and the Implementation of the Affordable Care Act

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) emphasizes integrated models of care

This introduces new opportunities to
- improve care coordination
- reduce unnecessary service use
- make health care more effective

Social workers can be leaders in implementing the ACA

(Andrews, Darnell, McBride, & Gehlert, 2013)
Social Work Expertise and the ACA

• Social workers are uniquely qualified to advance the ACA:
  – Situate individuals in their social contexts
  – Understand the relationship between resource systems
  – Guided by a rigorously researched evidence base
    • Can devise plans based on knowledge of mental and physical health interactions
  – Target disenfranchised groups
    • Approximately 29 million Americans will still lack insurance (Banthin et al, 2012)

(Andrews, Darnell, McBride, & Gehlert, 2013)
Help consumers enroll:
– conduct public education activities
– distribute information about the plans
– provide referrals to consumer assistance
– provide information that is culturally and linguistically accessible

This program is required to reach the un- and underinsured, who are part of the disenfranchised groups social workers serve

Social workers can lay claim to an uncharted enterprise that will affect the experience people have in the new health care market (Scott, 2012)

(Andrews, Darnell, McBride, & Gehlert, 2013)
ACA includes 2 provisions designed to enhance care coordination:
- Patient-centered medical homes (PCMHs) for Medicaid enrollees
- Accountable care organizations (ACOs), organizations of health providers accountable for Medicare beneficiaries

Each state will determine whether to include social workers in PCMHs, and ACOs do not include social workers
- Need to advocate for inclusion of social workers

(Andrews, Darnell, McBride, & Gehlert, 2013)
ACA Opportunities for Social Workers: Behavioral Health Treatment

- ACA extends the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act
  - 30 million people will gain coverage for behavioral health services (Buck, 2011)
  - Those newly eligible exhibit behavioral health disorders at higher rates (Garfield, Lave, & Donohue, 2010)

- To be reimbursed, need to establish strong ties to state Medicaid agencies

(Andrews, Darnell, McBride, & Gehlert, 2013)
• Roles will be filled by others if social workers do not advocate and demonstrate the effectiveness of our practice
• Scholars can assist by conducting policy analysis and research that shows how social workers can work effectively within intraprofessional health care teams

(Andrews, Darnell, McBride, & Gehlert, 2013)
References


Prepared by H Goldstein (2014)