IDD Health Care Toolkit telehealth training aims to increase access to community-based care

A new model of case-based telehealth training will offer practical advice to Tennessee community health care providers on how to manage the health concerns of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

This project awarded to the VKC University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) is among six projects selected nationally for funding by the Special Hope Foundation directed at investigating questions of cost and quality in provision of health care services to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Expanding the reach and use of the Health Care Toolkit for Primary Care Providers (IDD Health Care Toolkit), the project aims to reduce referrals to specialists for routine visits, thereby increasing access, cost-effectiveness, and quality care.

“This project meets the needs of community-based physicians who are frustrated because they have little to no training or experience in meeting the needs of their patients with IDD,” said Elise McMillan, co-director of the VKC UCEDD. “The well-documented health care disparities that exist for people with IDD are what drove us to develop the IDD Health Care Toolkit. Now, we need to train providers in how to use this resource and to provide them with an opportunity to receive feedback and input to deliver better care in their own communities.”

The telehealth approach will allow providers to present challenging cases to a multidisciplinary panel of experienced clinicians, while also receiving Continuing Medical Education credit. Involved panelists include specialists in family and internal medicine, psychiatry, psychology, neurology, occupational therapy, and behavior analysis. Panelists also will provide presentations on specific topics such as sleep disorders and psychotropic medication management to complement the cases.

“By using this telehealth model, we are building capacity for health care at the local level,” said McMillan. “We hope to reduce the need for patients to see specialists who are far from their homes and who also may have long waiting lists. By having a well-trained primary care provider, patients might have less need to rely on hospital emergency departments for routine care. Ultimately, we hope this might close the gap a bit on those health care disparities.”

The VKC UCEDD is partnering with the Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the University of Tennessee Boling Center for Developmental Disabilities UCEDD, the Tennessee Academy of Family Physicians, The Arc Tennessee, TennCare, and the Vanderbilt Health Affiliated Network.

The VKC UCEDD and its partners are seeking at least 20 Tennessee community-based primary care providers to participate.

For more information on the project, please contact Janet Shouse, program coordinator for the IDD Health Care Toolkit, at janet.shouse@vanderbilt.edu or at 615-875-8833.

Visit the IDD Health care Toolkit at: www.iddtoolkit.org