

Raising the Bar Project - Valley Nonprofit Resources

PROJECT SUMMARY

Raising the Bar is a two-year project that will help mental health agencies and practitioners in the San Fernando Valley regional of Los Angeles learn about and implement research-based mental health practices in the areas of *family psychoeducation* and *medication management*. It will provide:

- (1) a training program and follow-up technical assistance on implementing the multigroup family psychoeducation model for four large mental health agencies in the San Fernando Valley, including support for each agency to do strategic planning;
- (2) a training program about this evidence-based practice (EBP) for family involvement, offered to smaller mental health agencies in the Valley; and
- (3) an educational seminar for psychiatrists on the use of evidence-based practices for medication management, highlighting the challenges of appropriate psychopharmacology for low-income Medi-Cal patients.

The ultimate goal is to improve the quality of mental health services for people with serious mental illnesses.

The project addresses an increasingly urgent need in mental health today: *to build the capacity of service agencies to identify, rigorously implement, evaluate and sustain EBPs*. Throughout the health and human services field, these research-validated practices have increasingly become the “gold standard” – and in fields like mental health, funders are starting to require their use as a condition of funding support. However, for many mental health agencies, identifying appropriate EBPs is difficult, and so is high-quality implementation of them. Also, agencies need to address challenges of long-term sustainability for these practices once they’re set in place.

Leadership for this project is provided by Human Interaction Research Institute President Dr. Thomas Backer, who has studied EBPs and mental health services for many years; and San Fernando MHC Medical Director Dr. Alex Kopelowicz, who also is funded by the National Institute of Mental Health for research on use of a family education EBP to improve services for Latino clients. They will work in partnership with mental health agency staff throughout the Valley.

Raising the Bar is part of the *Valley Nonprofit Resources (VNR)* program, which provides capacity-building information and services for the more than 4,000 nonprofit organizations in the San Fernando Valley. Launched in Spring 2007, VNR will soon offer a website and an information and referral telephone service, technical assistance consultation and workshops, and other services. VNR is operated through a partnership of HIRI, California State University Northridge, MEND, and Volunteer Center of Los Angeles. Support for Raising the Bar has been provided by a grant from the Unihealth Foundation.