

CHECK THESE OUT...



Information regarding
Block Grant applications
and process

<http://www.samhsa.gov/grants/blockgrant/>



A report of the findings of an
independent evaluation of
the Community Mental
Health Services Block Grant
program (Block Grant)

<http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA10-4610/SMA10-4610.pdf>

Issue 21

focus

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TOPIC WATCH

Each month we will feature a different topic; expanding the knowledge, resources, and peer networking in targeted areas. These target areas will include workforce development, transition, supported education, leadership, organizational development, sustainability, and others as they are identified.



**For more information on
this publication contact
us at:**

**The CAFÉ TA Center
www.CAFETACenter.net
CAFETACenter@gmail.com
1-855-CAFETAC
(1-855-223-3822)**

Block Grants: What They Mean to You

Block Grants are grants given to States to allow States to address their unique behavioral health issues. There are more Block Grants than those related to mental health and substance abuse. Within SAMHSA, there are two block grants, the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant (SABG) and the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant (MHBG).

In 1981, the Reagan Administration sought and received from Congress a new way of providing assistance to states for an assortment of services, including substance abuse and mental health. The mechanism for providing this assistance was called "Block Grants." In general, Block Grant funds gave flexibility to states, allowing them to address their unique issues as they saw fit. A few requirements were added by Congress directing the state use of these funds in a variety of ways, but generally speaking, this was a move toward more state-level control.

Since the Block Grants came into being thirty plus years ago, health care systems, laws, knowledge, and conditions have changed. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) now observes a more complex interplay between the Block Grants and other funding streams, such as Medicaid, Medicare and private insurance. Increasing knowledge in the behavioral health field about evidence-based practices, self-direction, and peer services have prompted more consistency and direction to ensure that the nation's behavioral health system is providing the best and most cost effective care possible. It has also created a role for consumers in determining how Block Grant funds are expended. States solicit input on their Block Grant applications, and hundreds of organizations, providers, state agencies, and advocates have an opportunity to provide their views and ideas on the application, as well as implementation and use.

What is the purpose of the Block Grants?

States can use the Block Grant for prevention, treatment, recovery supports and other services that will supplement services covered by Medicaid, Medicare and private insurance. Block Grant funds are directed toward four purposes:

- Funding priority treatment and support services for individuals without insurance or for whom coverage is terminated for short periods of time.
- Funding those priority treatment and support services not covered by Medicaid, Medicare or private insurance for low income individuals and those that demonstrate success in improving outcomes and/or supporting recovery.
- Funding primary prevention including universal, selective and indicated prevention activities and services for persons not identified as needing treatment.
- Collecting performance and outcome data to determine the ongoing effectiveness of behavioral health promotion, treatment and recovery support services and plan the implementation of new services on a nationwide basis.

There are some variances between the two Block Grants within SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse Block Grant (SABG) and the Community Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG). They include differences in how data is collected, stakeholder input requirements for planning, and set asides for specific populations or programs, for example. The Centers within SAMHSA that administer Block Grants have different approaches to application requirements and reporting. In addition, States have different structures for accepting, planning, and accounting for the Block Grants and the Prevention Set Aside within the SABG. As a result, how these dollars are spent and what is known about the services and clients that receive these funds varies by Block Grant and by state. For this reason, in order for consumers to know how Block Grant funds are being used in their state, they need to become familiar with their state's application, and their state's method for getting consumer input on how the Block Grant is used.

The Role of Peer and Consumer Run Organizations in Block Grants

There are a variety of ways that the Block Grant funding and programs benefit consumer and peer run programs. For example:

- In 1986, a Federal statute was passed that required U.S. States and Territories to conduct mental health planning as a condition for receiving Federal mental health block grant funds. It also required that consumers of mental health services, parents of children receiving services, and family members be included in the planning group.
- Many organizations and peer run programs receive funding for their work and services through Block Grant dollars that flow into their state.
- The Block Grant programs within states require consumer input at multiple junctures.
- The programs funded by Block Grant dollars provide services and support to individuals in need of mental health services.
- SAMHSA solicits annual input on the upcoming Block Grant application and process, allowing consumers an opportunity to **provide** national guidance on how the Block Grant dollars are used, managed, and monitored.

There are multiple ways for consumer and peer run programs and organizations to become involved in the Block Grants.

- Make sure that you review and provide feedback on upcoming applications. This can be done as an individual or as an organization. Many organizations and advocates combine their comments to provide a "platform" response. The request for comments regarding the federal fiscal year Uniform Application for the Mental Health Block Grant and Substance Abuse Block Grant is published in the Federal Register. Links and further information can generally be found on the SAMHSA website, <http://www.samhsa.gov/>.
- Review your states Block Grant application and reports. These can usually be found on the state's official Mental Health Agency website. Become familiar with their approach to the use of funds, priority areas, and upcoming plans.
- States have a Mental Health Planning Council that is comprised of consumer and family representatives. Participate as a member or align with those on the Council to ensure that the needs of consumers are well represented. To learn more about Mental Health Planning Councils check out: <http://www.namhpac.org/about.html>.

