

Abt Associates Inc: Providing Systems and Impact Research and Technical Assistance for CMS FY05, FY06, and FY07 Real Choice Systems Change Grants

As part of the President's New Freedom Initiative, announced in February 2001, The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services have funded a number of grant programs to support community-based care alternatives for the elderly and individuals with disabilities who have been receiving institutionalized care. The Real Choice Systems Change (RCSC) Grants, aim to help States build an infrastructure that results in effective community supports and services (e.g., community-based attendant care) for children and adults with a disability or long-term illness, enabling them to receive home or community-based services. These grants require public-private partnerships and broad consumer participation—e.g., through a consumer task force. Abt Associates Inc. is assisting CMS with both a “system evaluation” and an “impact evaluation” of the FY2005, FY2006, and FY2007 RCSC Grants, which include 18 System Transformation (ST) grants and 18 Person-Centered Planning (PCP) grants. In addition, the evaluation is examining how the efforts of the FY2005 Family-to-Family and Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) grants support systems change.

Abt's Work with Systems Transformation Grantees:

Abt is collecting data for the FY2005 and FY2006 ST grant evaluations through site visits, key respondent interviews, and web-based data reporting. During the first year for each grant award, Abt provided technical assistance to ST grantees as they developed their strategic plans and evaluation strategies. A strategic plan template, designed by Abt, was used by grantees to help them define system transformation goals, objectives and strategies for implementation and evaluation, and any challenges and barriers to the system transformation that the grant will need to address. Each ST Grantee was assigned a team of two Abt Associates staff members who visited the grantee site in the first year and who were primary contacts for technical questions regarding systems change and strategic planning. These teams will continue to interact with ST grantees through site visits and telephone interviews for the duration of the grant in order to collect data annually for the national evaluation.

Grantees are asked to provide grant implementation updates semi-annually in a web-based report. Through this same web-report, grantees report annually on the initiative-level measures that Abt developed for the six goal areas of the ST grant (Access, Choice and Control, Quality Management Systems, IT, Funding, and Housing), in addition to the measures that grantees have developed to track and evaluate progress of their individual grant efforts.

Abt will summarize and synthesize all data collected from ST grantees in annual reports for CMS and work with CMS to identify cross-cutting themes and outcome and process measures. Abt Associates Inc.'s first Annual Report will be available on the HCBS Clearinghouse (www.hcbs.org) in August 2008.

Abt's Work on Aging and Disability Resource Center Grants:

Abt's evaluation of the ADRC grants consisted of a review and summarization of the activities of the approximately 20 FY05 ADRC grantees, with an emphasis on collaboration and integration of ADRC and ST efforts in states that have both grants. Qualitative and quantitative data from the annual ADRC grantee reports were abstracted by Abt analysts and augmented by participation in calls with the ADRC grantees and their national technical assistance provider. Evaluation of the FY05 ADRC grants was included in Abt's Annual Report (available through the HCBS Clearinghouse in August 2008), but Abt will continue to track how the ADRC grants have supported ST efforts.

Abt's Work on Family To Family Grants:

Abt's evaluation of the FTF grants will be conducted by a review of grantees' annual reports to identify key strategies used by the grants to reach families, major approaches to the provision of information and other supports, challenges and barriers to reaching families, and strategies used to address barriers. Abt's analysis will highlight special innovative strategies, and major findings from the FTF grant cycle reviews that will assist state and federal policy-makers in sustaining and enhancing the work of the FTF grantees.

Abt's Work on Person-Centered Planning Grants:

Abt's evaluation of the PCP grants will be based on data collected through telephone interviews and an 18-month and final report. Abt will design the template for these grantee reports, and conduct analysis and evaluation of the grantees' implementation efforts.

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