Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards awarded more than $4M to launch Senior Reach program

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards (MACMHB) has recently been awarded a grant of $4.2 million from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund to support initiatives aimed at improving the quality of health for seniors across the state.

The MACMHB grant dollars will help fund a pilot program, Senior Reach®, over the next two years to connect seniors who are isolated or in need of social support and to address behavioral health needs before a crisis occurs. Senior Reach® is a community program that works with multiple community partners to identify older adults who may need emotional or physical support and/or connection to other community services. The program is a service-based intervention targeting older adults experiencing problematic mental and emotional states; personality and physical changes; poor health; social isolation; substance abuse; physical abuse or neglect; and risk factors for suicide.

“The Senior Reach® program, a nationally recognized evidence based practice, will provide the twelve communities involved in this effort with the tools to reach and inform seniors about a range of health and human services resources available to them. This kind of outreach and education is essential in promoting the health and vitality of the seniors in our state,” said Robert Sheehan, chief executive officer of the Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards.

Non-traditional community partners such as Meals on Wheels and senior centers as well as traditional partners including primary care physicians and adult protective service programs serve as referral sources to the new Senior Reach® program. To refer a senior, the community partner contacts a call center, who then contacts the individual to engage them and provide information.
about the program. After an in-home assessment, the senior is referred to the best combination of Senior Reach® services tailored to his or her needs, which could include mental health care, care management, and/or a combination of services. Treatment planning is coordinated in partnership with the senior, is individualized, strengths-based, and recovery oriented.

“We’re proud to support the Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards and the positive impact they’re making on Michigan’s seniors,” said Rob Fowler, chair of the Michigan Health Endowment Fund Board. “Part of our mission at the Health Endowment Fund is to improve the health of seniors statewide, and by funding the Senior Reach® program, we’re able to help with that.”

The aim of the Michigan Senior Reach project, which will be implemented in twelve Michigan communities, is develop a Michigan based program implementation model, specific to the characteristics of Michigan’s behavioral health and older adult support services systems, that can be used to sustain and create additional Senior Reach® programs statewide. To accomplish this aim, the project will:

- Identify targeted at-risk older adults
- Develop and/or strengthen community partner referrals, outreach, and treatment
- Make a positive impact on the lives of older adults referred (as measured by a standardized outcome measurement tool)
- Increase referrals, community support, agency awareness, and sustainability.
- Develop the administrative, fiscal, and clinical infrastructure to support Senior Reach beyond the Health Endowment Fund support period

The mission of the Michigan Health Endowment Fund is to improve the health of Michigan residents and reduce the cost of health care, with special emphasis on the health and wellness of children and seniors. The fund was created as part of 2013 state legislation that allowed Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan to become a nonprofit mutual health insurer. Nearly $38 million in grants were awarded by the Michigan Health Endowment Fund last year in 2014 with an additional $8.5 million awarded in December to 29 Michigan community health foundations.
Additional information can be found at the Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards website at macmhb.org.

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