



# Community of Practice (CoP) Expanding Behavioral Health Services in Health Centers

Behavioral Health/Substance Use Disorder Integration Technical Assistance

*December 3, 2025*

Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Bureau of Primary Health Care (BPHC)

**Vision: Healthy Communities, Healthy People**



# Disclosure

---

*This webinar was produced for the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Bureau of Primary Health Care under contract number 47QRAA18D00FZ/75R60224F80097.*



## **Session Four**

# Leveraging Internal and External Communications for Integrated Behavioral Health Service Expansion



# Facilitator



Laura Ross, MS, LMFT, CCTP, CTMH

# Session Objectives

## Participants of today's session will be able to:

- Understand how language supports sustainable behavioral health integration and service expansion
- Identify strategies to build effective and consistent communication and messaging
- Identify strategies to build shared language that supports integrated care delivery at your health center



# Today's Agenda



Check-In and Between-Session Invitation Debrief



Understanding the Power of Language/  
Communication to Sustain Integrated Care



Shared Language Strategies for Integrated Care



Interactive Discussion and Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA)  
Planning



Session Wrap-Up, Questions, and Office Hours

# Previous CoP Session Check-in



**In the chat, please enter:**

- What, if anything, has stuck with you from the last CoP session(s)?
- What, if anything, did you take from the last CoP session(s) that you've discussed or adopted in your health center?

# Foundations of Integrated Care

Combined, these structures all support **integrated behavioral health services**.





# Discussion Questions



**In the chat, please enter:**

- What language does your organization use to describe integrated care/behavioral health service expansion in your setting?
- What practices has your organization put in place to support a focus on function rather than role/title in expanding services?

## A large, vibrant red heart is the central focus, set against a light blue background with a subtle vertical-line texture. The heart is filled with several smaller, colorful speech bubbles and hearts. Inside the red heart, there's a light blue speech bubble with a zigzag line, a small blue heart with two black dots, and two small tan squares. Surrounding the main heart are more speech bubbles: a red one with six white dots, a light blue one with horizontal lines, a tan one with three horizontal lines, a light blue one with a heart symbol, a tan one with three small red hearts, and a light blue one with two small black hearts. A solid red heart is also positioned above the main heart. The overall composition is playful and romantic, emphasizing themes of love and communication.

- 

# Language and Communication: Assessment and Reflection (1)



- What language do you use to discuss behavioral health and integrated care...
  - With patients?
  - Within your care team?
  - Across departments in your health center?
  - In your community and with community partners?
- What communication strategies do you use to convey your focus on behavioral health and integrated care?
  - Language—direct spoken and written communication
  - Policies
  - Marketing

# Language and Communication: Assessment and Reflection (2)



- Thinking about your patients and your community, what messages or language might make them more (or less) willing to engage in integrated care services or behavioral health expansion services?

# Language and Communication Discussion:

## Patient



- What do you tell patients so they know they are receiving integrated behavioral health care services?
  - Who talks with your patients about integrated care?
  - What communication formats do you use to inform patients about new and existing services?
- What language/messaging do you use to talk to patients about...
  - Behavioral health services?
  - The care team members who provide behavioral health services?

# Integrated Care Language Discussion: Care Team

## (1)



- How do your various care team members refer to themselves within an integrated care model?
- How do your care team members refer to one another...
  - When talking with patients?
  - With other care team members?
- What communication systems does your clinical care team use to communicate with one another effectively?

# Integrated Care Language Discussion: Care Team

## (2)



- How does communication within your care team reflect a focus on function rather than on role/title?
- How do care team members learn to communicate in a way that conveys they are working in an integrated behavioral health care model?

# Integrated Care Language Discussion: Health Center



- What messaging does your health center use to communicate the integrated care you provide to...
  - Patients?
  - Your staff?
  - The community?
- What communication strategies and protocols do you use to ensure effective care collaboration?
- What policies, practices, and protocols do you have around provision of integrated behavioral health care?
- How do you market and promote integrated behavioral health care services at your health center?



# Integrated Care Language Discussion: Community (1)



- Who are your community partners and referral organizations?
  - How would you describe the relationship between your health center and these organizations?
- To what extent do community partners understand integrated behavioral health care?
- How do you communicate with community and referral organizations about integrated behavioral health and the scope of services your health center provides?

# Integrated Care Language Discussion: Community (2)



- How could you partner with community and referral agencies to expand the community's capacity to meet patient health needs and improve health outcomes?
- How could you increase community awareness of your integrated care model and how it supports the community?

# Strategies for Effective Integrated Care Language and Communication



## Use Common, Shared Language

Use language about integrated care that your patients and your care team will embrace.



## Provide Language Education

Patients, care team members, health center staff, and messaging/materials refer to integrated behavioral health care the same way.



## Care Team Language Reflects Team Focus

Adopt a name for your care team to foster a sense of teamwork and belonging. This leverages language to build a strong collaborative environment.



## Optimize Communication Opportunities

Foster multiple opportunities for internal collaboration and communication.



## Get Visible

Promote integrated behavioral health care in multiple ways (e.g., website, flyers, buttons).

# Common Integrated Care Team Names

**Integrated Care Team**

**Primary Care Team**

**Interdisciplinary Care  
Team**

**Care Team**

**Patient Care Team**

**Collaborative Care Team**

**Patient Wellness Team**

**Whole-Person Care  
Team**

**Others? What do you  
use?**

# Naming Your Care Team Discussion (1)



- Which integrated care team names may work at your health center?
  - What about your current work environment and/or community served makes some of these names more, or less, appealing?

# Leveraging Language to Support Sustainable Change



## Patient-Level Language Change

“No, thanks, I’m trying to quit.”  
vs. “No, thanks, I’m (becoming)  
a non-smoker.”



## Provider-Level Language Change

“I’m in the family medicine  
department.” vs. “I’m an  
integrated care team  
member.”



## Organizational-Level Language Change

“We are co-located.” vs.  
“We’re an integrated health  
center.”

# Naming and Language Discussion (2)



- Think of a personal or professional change or goal you'd like to make. Describe that goal in terms of...
  - Desired outcome
  - Process to achieve goal
  - How you will describe yourself when successful
- How does thinking about change in this way feel? What feels comfortable? What is uncomfortable?
- How does thinking of change in this way impact your level of investment or motivation?

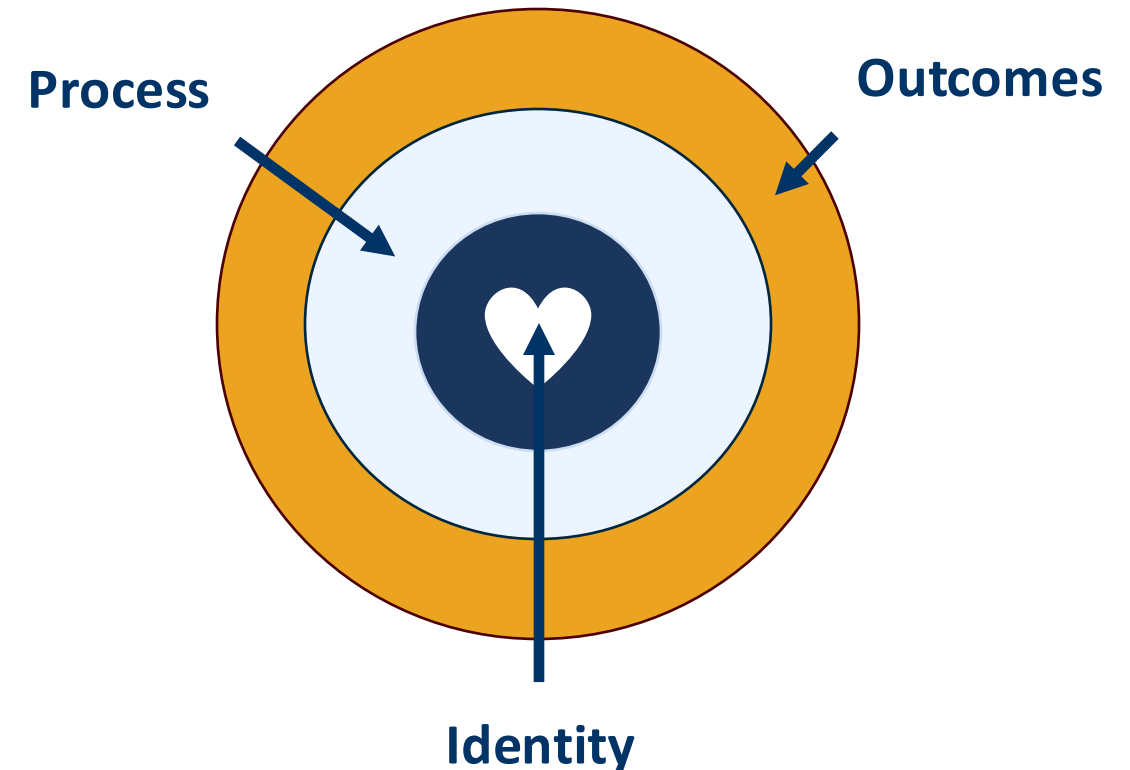
# Effective Health Behavior (Habit) Change Happens at Three Levels

The three levels of change:

- **Outcomes** – What?
  - Most focused on, but least impactful.
- **Process** – How?
  - A focus on process will get you to outcomes, at least temporarily.
- **Identity** – Who/Why?
  - Often least focused on, but most powerful and transformative.

A focus on process translates into change.

A focus on the who/why translates into sustained change.





# Strategies to Leverage Language and Naming in Sustainable Integrated Care



Understand and leverage how language influences environment



Implement communication strategies that drive collaboration



Prioritize opportunities to practice language and naming conventions



Identify processes to sustain language and naming conventions

# Resources/References

---

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. (n.d.). *The Academy: Integrating Behavioral Health & Primary Care*. <https://integrationacademy.ahrq.gov/>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (n.d.). *Evidence-Based Practices Resource Center*. <https://www.samhsa.gov/libraries/evidence-based-practices-resource-center>
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). (2023, June). Section 1: Overview of Key Concepts and Tools. <https://www.ahrq.gov/teamstepps-program/curriculum/communication/overview/index.html>

# Health Center Satisfaction Assessment

**We'd love your feedback  
on today's session!**

Please take 2 minutes to  
complete the Health Center TA Satisfaction  
Assessment.

**You must complete the assessment to claim  
continuing education credit.**

**Thank you for your time!**



[https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/  
CoP6Session4](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CoP6Session4)

# Thank You!



---

[bphc.hrsa.gov](https://bphc.hrsa.gov)

Questions? Reach out via the [BPHC Contact Form](#)



[Sign up for the \*Primary Health Care Digest\*](#)

# Connect with HRSA

Learn more about our agency at:

[www.HRSA.gov](http://www.HRSA.gov)



[Sign up for the HRSA eNews](#)

FOLLOW US:

