

## Behavioral Health Services in the New Decade: Perspectives on Practices and Policies

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This special section of *AJCP* on behavioral health services is meant to provide high quality, policy-relevant articles that can be used by policy makers and academics alike to understand recent developments and evaluate the need for changes to practices and policies. With the new decade and the changes taking place in the USA at the federal level and in many states, there arises opportunities for improvements to ensure access to high quality, effective behavioral health services. While at this writing the future of the Obama health care reform initiative is unclear, it is clear that evidence-based practices and high quality evaluations of programs and practices will become increasingly important in this decade. The special section authors address various aspects of the current behavioral health service matrix that have implications for consumer-led services, public health orientation to behavioral health, inclusion of faith-based organizations in the behavioral health system of care, the intersections of the behavioral health and justice systems, and so on. Importantly, the section includes articles that focus on issues and groups about which less is known, such as the behavioral health issues of persons with disabilities and Native Americans.

Two of the articles address evidence-based approaches to shoring the systems of care for individuals and families with behavioral health issues, and a complimentary article critically assesses one of the major policy approaches of the last decade, the involvement of faith-based

organizations actively participating with public funding in the system of care. In the *The Wraparound Process*, Eric Bruns and his colleagues review the evidence basis for using wraparound to structure systems of behavioral health care for children and families. Ryan Kilmer and his colleagues argue for policy changes to create more flexibility for families to access services in their article on *Family-Centered Care*. In her article on *Public Funding for Faith-Based Organizations*, Fredrica Kramer analyzes the policy developments resulting in expanded public funding for the inclusion of faith-based organizations in providing services and argues FBO programs should be carefully monitored and evaluated to assure legality and choice of services for recipients.

The remaining four articles focus on populations needing special attention to address behavioral health needs. In their article examining *Reentry among Released Inmates with Serious Mental Illness*, Jacques Baillargeon and his colleagues discuss the challenges—and offer recommendations—for behavioral health systems of care to successfully reintegrate released inmates with serious mental illnesses into the community. Michal Soffer and his colleagues focus on persons with disabilities—the “largest and among the most diverse minority group” and a group that has not been the subject of much behavioral health research—and argue for policies that would allow low-income, working age persons to extricate themselves from the poverty that is associated with behavioral health risks, among other challenges, in their article, *Barriers to Promoting Asset Accumulation*. Jessica Goodkind and her colleagues provide a literature review and derive policy recommendations from that literature for another group that has not been studied extensively, Native American youth, in their article, *Promoting Healing and Restoring Trust: Policy Recommendations for Improving Behavioral*

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*Health Care for American Indian/Alaska Native Adolescents*. Finally, in *Gentrification and Urban Children's Well-Being*, Diana Formoso and her colleagues also address issues of youth, analyzing risks and solutions to urban children growing up in gentrifying neighborhoods.

We very much appreciate the efforts of the authors to address these important behavioral health issues and to direct attention to the policies that urgently need examination. We also want to thank the many reviewers who

supplied critiques and insights that helped us select manuscripts and assisted authors in sharpening their focus and analysis. Our hope is that these articles provide analytical and evidence-based guidance for the review and reconsideration of relevant behavioral health services policies with an eye to the improvement and sustainability of access to high-quality, meaningful and effective services in 2010 and beyond.