



## **PATH National Definitions Webcast: Questions and Answers**

### **Definition of Homelessness**

**When documenting imminent risk of homeless, is self-report sufficient or do providers need supporting documentation?**

Self-report from the consumer is acceptable for determining PATH eligibility.

### **Definition of Serious Mental Illness**

**Are there any diagnoses not eligible for PATH services? What about situational depression, anxiety disorder, eating disorders, traumatic brain injury (TBI), etc.?**

Different states have varying definitions of diagnoses that meet the criteria of Serious Mental Illness (SMI) and state definitions must be followed. According to PATH, SMI is defined as a mental illness that impairs a person's ability to function. The options on the annual report include schizophrenia and related disorders, other psychotic disorders, affective disorders, personality disorders, and other serious mental illness.

**What would be examples of "difficulty in functioning"?**

Difficulty functioning is when the individual is unable to perform the basic activities of daily living. Homelessness and inability to maintain employment indicate difficulty in functioning.

**Is a clinical diagnosis necessary to determine PATH eligibility?**

No, a current or former clinical diagnosis is not required and PATH providers should not require a clinical diagnosis prior to PATH enrollment. If there is no current clinical diagnosis the consumer should be counted under "other serious mental illness" on the PATH report. Only individuals who are licensed to make a diagnosis can determine the nature of the SMI.

**How is SMI documented if there is no clinical diagnosis?**

Different programs and states have different requirements for documentation of SMI. Some examples are mental health screening tools, case notes, and consumer self report.



**If someone has a clinical diagnosis, should the PATH worker obtain this documentation?**

No, documenting the consumer self report in the case file is sufficient documentation to support the SMI eligibility criteria.

**If you encounter an individual who has an observable SMI but does not want to be linked to mental health services or does not admit to having SMI can you enroll them in PATH?**

Yes, individuals who are not ready to receive mental health services and do not initially agree that they have an SMI are eligible as long as the PATH worker documents the rationale for the mental health eligibility. Providers are encouraged to come to a mutual agreement with the consumer regarding SMI but this may not be possible at the beginning stages of enrollment.

**If I enroll someone because I believe he or she has SMI and it is later determined that they do not, will I be penalized in any way?**

No, you will not be penalized, but the individual would no longer be eligible for PATH and should be transitioned out of the program.

### **Definition of Co-Occurring Substance Use**

**Would a diagnosis of "Substance induced Psychosis" be a PATH eligible diagnosis? What about if the individual has mental health issues but doesn't meet the SMI definition?** In both cases the answer is no. If the substance use is primary the individual is not eligible for PATH enrollment. Individuals who do not experience SMI are not eligible for PATH.

**Does a consumer remain eligible for PATH services if they are active substance users and their SMI appears to be a result only of their substance abuse?** If the individual has symptoms of SMI documented by the PATH worker the eligibility criteria are met. If it is later determined that the individual does not have an SMI the individual is no longer eligible for PATH services and should be transitioned to a more appropriate program.

### **Definition of Enrolled**

**What distinguishes consumers who are "enrolled" from consumers who are only "outreach"?**



Any person that a PATH worker contacts through outreach may be counted as outreach. (please note that if a person is referred to the PATH program they do not count as contacted through outreach). Consumers become enrolled when 1) it is determined that they meet the eligibility criteria, 2) they agree to work with the PATH worker, and 3) an individual case file with basic demographic information and information about services provided is opened. Individuals counted as outreach but not enrolled either did not meet the eligibility criteria or did not agree to PATH services. The only data required for outreach contacts not enrolled is the unduplicated number of people. A file is not required for persons contacted but not enrolled.

**Are "Enrolled" individuals who are served continuously for several years included in PATH Annual Reports from one year to the next? Can well-documented engagement and assessment activity occur over several years time?**

Yes. PATH is designed to transition consumers to mainstream services. In some cases this may take more than one year and there is no nationally imposed time limit on PATH services (check with your state for state specified time limits). Individuals can be counted as enrolled (B3 and included in the C and D tables) for multiple years but should only be counted as outreached (B2a) and enrolled through outreach (B2b) once unless they were transitioned to mainstream services but were later found to meet the PATH eligibility criteria again.

**Sometimes an individual who is already receiving mental health services in the community becomes homeless or is at risk of homelessness. Can that individual be enrolled into PATH?**

Yes, individuals who are already connected to mental health services and meet the PATH eligibility criteria are eligible for PATH services. PATH is intended to serve individuals who are disconnected from mainstream services so individuals already connected to services should not be the focus of PATH programs.

**If only linkage and referrals are provided, is it expected that a "file" will be opened?**

If the consumer meets the eligibility requirements, and the provider meets with them more than just once or twice, it is expected that the person would be enrolled and a file would be opened. If the individual does not meet the



eligibility requirements or does not agree to services, they would be counted as an outreach contact. Therefore, the individual would not be enrolled and a file would not be required. Outreach and referral are eligible PATH expenses.

### Additional Questions

#### **What should I do if I am working with someone and I determine that they are not eligible?**

If you find that a consumer you are working with does not meet eligibility criteria, you may continue to provide outreach services and referral but you may not enroll the person. You are encouraged to find a more appropriate service provider to meet their needs.

#### **What is the timeline to implement these definitions?**

These definitions are recommendations from the PATH Administrative Workgroup and are not mandated. Please confirm with your State PATH Contact before implementing these definitions. Once you have confirmation, please begin to implement these definitions as soon as possible or as instructed by your State PATH Contact.