

September 2022 APS TARC Podcast Transcript

Person and Community Centered Approaches to APS Cases Involving Substance Use Disorder

Krista Brown: Welcome to the Adult Protective Services, Technical Assistance Resource Center, APS TARC podcast, the fourth, in a series of podcasts planned for this year. We come to you with the goal of sharing promising practices and innovations from various APS programs who have received Administration for Community Living ACL discretionary grants.

We hope to highlight what is achievable with fresh ideas and new partnerships to help you envision what may be replicated in your program. In this podcast, Jennifer Spoeri, APS TARC subject matter expert in Lianna Waller. Acting Adult Protective Services, Bureau, Chief discuss how Montana APS has maximized ACL funding to work with APS clients, alleged perpetrators, community, and service providers to better serve.

Montanan's experiencing opioid and substance use disorders. Now let's join Jennifer Spoeri in Lianna Waller in [00:01:00] conversation.

Jennifer Spoeri: Welcome to the APS TARC podcast, featuring Montana APS. Today, we're gonna be discussing Montana's ACL APS enhancement grants. Montana's 2018 grant integrated the reporting of suspected abuse and exploitation into the licensing and certification process for facilities

standardized risk and safety assessments and data collection implemented new tools to track the outcomes of interventions and worked with Montana tribal entities to improve data reporting. Montana's 2020 APS enhancement grant built on this 2018 grant by continuing to improve data and information gathering processes.

They utilized a tracking system to document and better understand opioid misuse by alleged victims and alleged perpetrator. I would now like to introduce Lianna Waller, the interim bureau, chief of Montana APS, Lianna is responsible for the everyday operations of the agency. Lianna, tell our listeners about your experience [00:02:00] in Montana's APS agency and how you came to work in APS.

Lianna Waller: Hi. Yes. Thanks, Jennifer, for having me. Um, so I began with Montana APS back in 2017 as an investigator. Um, at that time we managed our own intake and we also carried, um, long term cases, which were our state appointed guardianship cases, as well as working. Um, investigations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Um, since then I got involved with the pilot program, um, through this grant that helped create our social services unit, which is really sort of the ongoing part of our agency. Um, we started with myself

and then we brought on three additional workers. And as of today, we currently have a. Of, um, six. So we've grown that [00:03:00] unit, um, to do this work and that's really exciting.

I am currently now, um, the interim bureau chief, our bureau chief, Trevor Tangen has deployed, um, with the military for 12 months. So, he will be back next year, probably July of 20, 23. And, um, in, in his absence, I'll be, you know, working as the interim and just making sure all of these programs, uh, continue

Jennifer Spoeri: well, that's certainly something commendable to highlight.

So, we wish Trevor all the best. Before we jump into the conversation surrounding Montana's ACL enhancement grants. Let's talk about Montana. Can you give our listeners some background about your state?

Lianna Waller: Yeah, Montana. Um, one is, uh, an incredibly beautiful state. Uh, we are one of the we're the fourth largest state in the, in the nation.

We have 56 counties. And right now [00:04:00] our agency, we have about 36 investigators who cover all 56 counties, uh, last year to give an idea of kinda, you know, what we saw for reports we saw about. 12,000 reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, um, last fiscal year. So those are reports in from across the state.

Um, yeah, so we're, that's, that's a territory. It's a lot of territory. A lot of our territory is very rural. Um, so we have investigators who, you know, may have to drive six hours in a, in a Workday to be able to investigate a report. Mm,

Jennifer Spoeri: well, so that explains why in a prior conversation you were talking about how Montana was closing satellite offices to allow workers to work remotely before the pandemic hit.

So, tell us a little bit more about your department's success, even before the [00:05:00] pandemic with remote work.

Lianna Waller: Yeah, we, um, you know, it was a little bit of a blessing in disguise that we were able to start sending our workers, um, kind of home prior to the pandemic. We started, um, doing some remote work, uh, after we realized that a lot of the work

our investigators, especially our field staff, what they were doing was being conducted from the field or their vehicle. Um, so it really didn't make sense to have these offices when, um, most of the time was spent. Um, away from their desk. So, in February of 2020, um, we were already in the motion of, of closing those satellite offices and allowing workers to work from home.

Um, we were able to equip our, um, staff with the. With the technology, they would need to be able to work remotely. Um, so [00:06:00] they all have laptops. They have cell phones. Um, they had, you know, workstations in their homes, um, and they were pretty, pretty much fully functional out in the field and from their homes.

So once the pandemic hit, um, it really was just. You know, few workers who had remained in the office, um, that then made the, made the switch.

Jennifer Spoeri: Yeah. That was really some kind of, some kind of timing you guys had there. yeah. So, I understand you were yeah. You were in another position when the initial grant was written, but do you have any background on how the ideas came up for the grant application?

This time?

Lianna Waller: Yeah. Um, so I, I do know that this grant was out of a collaboration between our, um, previous bureau, chief Michael Hagenlock, and our research analysis with Purdue, Mary Liu. They had [00:07:00] met at NAPSA conference and started conversations around. These enhancement grants and some of the projects that could be done and, um, together, they, you know, started collaborating and, and, and built these, these programs.

Jennifer Spoeri: That's great. That networking is so important. So speaking of networking, tell us a little bit about the partners involved in this most recent. Sure.

Lianna Waller: So, Marion Liu, uh, is with Purdue University and we have partnered with her to help with the analysis of the, the data that we're collecting. Um, we also have a contract with University of Illinois, Chicago, and Karen and Ken Conrad, um, have helped us develop our screening tools along with JUMP technology, who is, um, the.

They've created our data system LEAPS that we use. They've helped [00:08:00] us sort of put all of these screening tools, these, uh, data collections. Mechanisms into practical use within our LEAP system. So, it doesn't require our workers to utilize different programs. We can do everything within our LEAP system, which is what we use to, you know, track all of the cases that come through our office.

We also have worked and collaborated with our Montana State Unit on Aging. Uh, we have a Montana Association of Area on Aging agencies or what we call M4A and we've contracted with them to sort of help us do some of this ongoing monitoring of these cases that we've identified as having. Opioid use or substance use.

And there's the investigators have then built these service plans, uh, with referrals, for services, so all [00:09:00] around. Um, it's a really, you know, great program we've contracted, and we collaborate with a lot of different agencies, which has been really helpful to the success of this program.

Jennifer Spoeri: Yeah. You sound like you've got a great team.

Surrounding you. So, um, I guess tell us a little bit about the goal of this grant before we get into the details.

Lianna Waller: Okay. So, the goal of this grant is really to identify, um, the opioid issues and substance use issues of the population that we serve. Um, so through the support of our research team and our development team, we've created a opioid disorder, screener, and a substance use.

Screener. These are tools that our investigators are using and, and, um, completing while they're doing their investigations out in the field from those, they're [00:10:00] developing service plans that are then being referred over to our social services unit and they follow up with those service plans to find out, did these services get established?

If not, why not? And what that part helps us really do is be able to identify a couple things. Um, it's helping us identify where the gaps might be in, in that, between us APS, closing out a case and a provider picking up that referral. And it's helping us ensure that those service referrals do get established so that we can hopefully reduce some of the recidivism that we see, um, with many cases.

Um, the other goal is really to be able to, um, follow up. And this is the part that our M4A team does is follow up on those [00:11:00] services long term to check in on the quality and the quantity of those services that are being provided. We also are trying to not only just focus on the alleged victim in these cases, but we're also trying to focus on the alleged perpetrator.

So, if there are service referrals that help, um, meet the needs of the whole unit or the family unit, um, then we are helping establish and connect people to those services.

Jennifer Spoeri: Gotcha. That's pretty innovative.

Can you tell us about some of the success you've seen throughout the grant? Yeah.

Lianna Waller: So, um, we started our data collection in October of 2021, um, and just between October and December of that year, we saw an increase in service plans from 14%. To 43%. So, our investigators went, have [00:12:00] increased their development of these service plans in that short timeframe.

So, um, that's really great. Uh, that means that we're identifying the needs of the individuals we're coming in contact with and we're helping build service plans to address those

Jennifer Spoeri: concerns. That's great. Why do you think this increased.

Lianna Waller: You know, I think, um, a couple things, one, I think that prior to this grant and this, this project, oftentimes, you know, the workers in the field are making a lot of, um, probably more verbal referrals, um, rather than building a plan around those referrals.

So sometimes depending on that individual, those services may fall. Fall through a crack. Um, they may not be, they may not be able to set those services up. Um, so I think we saw the [00:13:00] increase in service plans as a result of our training of the field staff, on how to build these service plans and really identify what were the needs of the individual and what services might be available to, um, address those needs.

And I think through a lot of training, um, in through the project goals of this grant, it allowed us to work with our staff on how to develop those. And I think that's why we've seen things.

Jennifer Spoeri: Yeah. And that's really in innovative and inclusive to think about the perpetrators as part of part of the care plan, because so many times in APS work the, um, client.

Alleged victim. They really don't want to move. They don't want anything to happen to that alleged perpetrator and they just want the problem to be solved. So, trying to address that is super [00:14:00] innovative. So, um, let's shift gears a little bit here now and talk about any challenges, cuz our work is never easy, but very rewarding.

So, talk about the challenges that you've experienced

Lianna Waller: through. Yeah. And I think, um, still kind of along those lines, you know, some of the challenges that you run into, um, for our field staff, when they're wanting to complete these screening tools, um, you know, sometimes an individual who may be experienced.

Or having opioid use or substance use, um, they may not be typically forthcoming about their use and they may not want to give information about those habits. Um, so, you know, that has been a real challenge of, of making. Sure, that our field staff are trained in ways to be able to communicate, um, why we're asking those questions and, um, to be able to get, [00:15:00] you know, real truthful answers from the respondent on.

What is occurring, um, and then, you know, making sure that we have resources available, um, and are knowledgeable of resources that they, we can then refer them to, to help, um, address any of those concerns.

Jennifer Spoeri: Yeah. And when we were speaking previously, you really were speaking about how the systems have evolved and there's a new initiative in Montana that allows.

the substance users to enter a program in various stages. Is that correct? It's sounds like it's very focused on the

Lianna Waller: recovery. Yeah, I think, um, you know, as a, as a whole, the state of Montana is really working on how can we address the, the opioid issue in our state. Um, and one of the new, um, programs that has come out and I'm hopeful that we're going to see a lot more resources, [00:16:00] um, come available for people who may be struggling with opioid or substance.

Um, disorders is that we will be able to make referrals for more programs, but there is, um, you know, an initiative to allow people to enter at different points of, um, Access within their communities to seek assistance for these issues. Um, and I think in collaboration with some of those programs that might get started around this entry system, uh, we'll be able to have more information on what's available and more direction on, um, how to connect people in our communities.

Jennifer Spoeri: Yeah. That, that sounds really promising. Lots of good stuff going on. So, um, what other opportunities do you see in the future? Sounds like the, the opportunities are endless.

Lianna Waller: Yeah, I think so. I mean, I think we're, um, you know, really responding [00:17:00] to our growing, um, our aging population in Montana, and we're responding to the concern that a lot of areas where, um, the population we serve, uh, reside in their communities.

There's not a lot of services. And so how do we bolster those services? How do we make sure that the populations of people who are aging in those communities have access to. Services that aid them and assist them in the aging process. Um, we also have, uh, new to our state is the office of American Indian Health.

Um, and we have a new director, Stephanie Ironshooter, and we're really excited to have her in that role and have her collaborate with us on how we can. Better work, um, with our tribal entities and our, our tribal communities, um, to make sure that we're meeting the needs of all. Montanans, [00:18:00]

Jennifer Spoeri: that's really great to hear.

So, um, any other highlights that you'd like to, to highlight in Montana? Um,

Lianna Waller: you know, I think just overall is the thing that is really working well for us. And that we're really excited about is being able to better track, um, these services and the resources that are available across our state and to also kind of identify areas where they're lacking so that we can help, um, build those services and those resources for those, um, communities, and I think to better

understand, you know, the, the opioid use and substance use issues that are present within this population that we serve, um, and interact with so that we are, we are addressing those issues also.

Um, and that we're better understanding how it impacts and affects the population that we serve.

Jennifer Spoeri: Yeah. [00:19:00] Yeah. And, and within families is something you're really. Looking at, which is just fantastic. Mm-hmm so overall, I always like to ask what's the feedback you're receiving from the field. What are you, your staff in Montana saying about this?

Lianna Waller: Yeah. Yeah. I think the feedback has been really great. It's been really supportive. Um, you know, I think our providers, especially across the state are really excited to have us be doing this. Um, Additional service of following up with, uh, victims and perpetrators to ensure that services are being established.

Um, I also think that they're, um, you know, supportive of us, looking at these issues of opioid use and substance use because like many communities across the country, um, you know, we're not unique. We're, we're having these same issues too. And so really, um, trying to better understand what that looks like within our population.

[00:20:00] Serve. And what are some of the impacts, um, that it's having on these populations? I think people are really, um, appreciative of our efforts to better understand that. And then, you know, we're seeing that, um, the recidivism is decreasing. I mean, we're seeing that we're able to get people into services, um, and that we're.

Casting out a safety net to be able to catch some of these people who may have fallen through the cracks in the past. And so, I think, um, providers and, um, you know, citizens are just really happy and I think it also is, um, You know, our field staff are feeling it too, because they're able to see, you know, individuals get into the services that they need to address some of the concerns that, that we're initially bringing them into our services.

And so, for our field staff, I think it feels like, um, you know, a weight to [00:21:00] off their shoulders to know that these individuals are getting into services and they're not coming back month after month with the same concerns.

Jennifer Spoeri: Mm-hmm yeah. And you're really giving them the tools they need to do their job well, and from what I understand in our previous conversations, you've even had, um, APS or APS in the state train, other workers, APS workers.

Is that correct within this? Oh

Lianna Waller: yeah. Yeah. Within our own state. And then, um, we have collaborated with Nevada who was, um, the other state who received this opioid grant. And, um, we've worked with them on how, and we've shared information on how each of our programs have been successful in, in doing parts of the project.

Um, one of the things we've shared with them is how we're working with alleged perpetrators on completing these screening tools and gathering this information. Um, so yeah, I [00:22:00] think, you know, for us, um, it's great to be able to have another state, uh, doing some of the same work and we can work with them and share with them, you know, what's successful.

And what challenges are we running, um, to help sure we're building the best program we can.

Jennifer Spoeri: Yeah. That that's the end game. So Lianna, anything else you'd like to add to, to close the

Lianna Waller: podcast? No. I, I mean, I think that's everything. Um, this has just been such a joy and I really appreciate you having us on to share about our, our project that we're working on and our program.

And, um, you know, what's worked for us because I hope it does benefit other states who might be considering, um, you know, these same, these programs or, um, grant funded opportunities. Well,

Jennifer Spoeri: I have to thank you for sharing all of this valuable information and, um, you're really [00:23:00] improving some outcome outcomes for your APS clients in Montana.

And I'm sure our listeners will appreciate all of this information and can use it going forward in the future.

Krista Brown: Thank you very much for listening. The APS TARC is a project of the US Administration for Community Living, Administration on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services and administered by WRMA incorporated. Contractor's findings conclusions and points of view, do not necessarily represent the official policy of the federal government.

To give us feedback on this podcast or any other APS TARC product. Please email us at apstarc-TA@acl.hhs.gov. And please join us next time for another APS TARC podcast.