Recent Study Links Reliable Transportation to Higher Program Success Rates
September 10, 2020

Tulsa has limited public transportation options to help people get to needed social service agencies located in various parts of the city. For families that do not have reliable transportation it can often take several hours on a city bus to attend one appointment; and with young children it can be stressful for both the child and adult. For an agency, the cancellation and no-show rates generally run between 20-30%. For a one month period, an agency estimated that of the 32% of ‘no-shows’ around 18% were due to transportation issues.

A recent study published by the Infant and Early Childhood Workgroup of the Children’s Behavioral Health Partnership of Tulsa, which works to identify the needs and barriers of families with children between the ages of 0 to 5 face when navigating the mental health system, found that program participants were more successful when they had access to reliable transportation through Modus.

Modus is a nonprofit in Tulsa with the mission of removing barriers through innovative transportation solutions, education, and advocacy. Their curb-to-curb transportation service, which relies primarily on volunteer drivers, enables social service agencies to focus on their core services and ensures participants who lack transportation get the services they need to succeed.

In 2018, the Infant and Early Childhood Workgroup, focused on solutions to the transportation barrier that many families face and conducted a pilot study in partnership with mental health agencies, child welfare, and Modus throughout 2018-2019. The goal of the pilot was to decrease the number of missed appointments and increase the rate of participation in services. Through the partnership with Modus and the cooperation with Family and Children’s Services and OKDHS Child Welfare the rate of participation increased and the court saw an improvement in overall outcomes for the families.

Of those who participated in the pilot, seven out of eight families were working on reunification. Prior to the transportation pilot being offered, the average reunification rate was 50%, with those that were receiving similar wraparound services. The participants who received rides from Modus stated that, while the rides were helpful and allowed them to attend all appointments, the support and consistency in drivers created a larger network of support and made families more hopeful.

A lack of transportation to attend scheduled appointments greatly reduces a parent’s ability to satisfy court ordered obligations and delays or hinders a parent’s chance to reunify with a child that is in state custody. Eliminating this barrier is crucial to the success of a care plan, however the capacity of a care coordinator to provide this service is costly. Through this pilot, it was identified that the success of making regular appointments built self-confidence and improved the clients’ outcomes. The caring drivers that helped by offering a smile and often a word of encouragement became part of the team supporting the parent. This led to fewer cancelled rides and a sense of accountability. Data shows that reducing the barriers and providing for basic needs is the foundation for hope, and hope is the foundation for healing.

The study identified transportation as a real barrier for those receiving services of any kind, and found that once the barrier is removed, individuals and families have a better chance of success and, in this instance, a better chance of reunifying with their children. The benefits of receiving regular, safe transportation to appointments extends well beyond the participants themselves, and places the entire family on the road to success.

- The complete study can be found here.
- To learn more about Modus, visit www.modustulsa.org.
- To learn more about the Infant and Early childhood workgroup of the Children’s Behavioral Health Partnership of Tulsa, visit https://mhack.org/childrens-mental-health.
INFANT, TODDLER AND EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY GROUP
TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE PILOT

GOAL: INCREASE ACCESS TO COURT ORDERED SERVICES FOR PARENTS PARTICIPATING IN TULSA'S SAFE BABIES COURT

OUTCOMES MEASURE: 1. REDUCTION IN MISSED APPOINTMENTS

2. INCREASED PARTICIPATION IN SERVICES

The Infant, Toddler and Early Childhood Community Group in Tulsa works to identify the needs and barriers that families with children birth to five face navigating the mental health system. Through community collaboration they work to ensure that the social and emotional well-being of children and their families is fostered through an early childhood mental health system of care. By addressing gaps, they work to make sure that Oklahoma’s children and families receive the services that they need through evidence-based practices in infant and early childhood mental health care and throughout the community.

In 2018 the community group focused on solutions to the transportation barrier that many families face. Tulsa has limited public transportation options and the services are often located in various parts of the city. For families that do not have reliable transportation it often takes several hours on a city bus to attend one appointment; and with young children it can cause undue stress on both the child and adult. For an agency, the cancellation and no-show rates generally run between 20-30%. In one month it was estimated that of the 32% of ‘no-shows’ around 18% were due to transportation issues.

The community group looked at several options and investigated other comparable metro community solutions. Evaluation of the cost of partnering with local ride share services, case management hours used for transportation, as well as utilizing volunteer agencies was conducted over several months. With a wide range of need the community group agreed to partner with Safe Babies Court Team to pilot a program utilizing MODUS, a local Tulsa non-profit offering rides for mental health and social services.

Over the next several months a process for implementation was developed in partnership with mental health agencies, child welfare, and MODUS. The pilot sought to reach 10 families that were participating in the Safe Babies Court Team Approach. Each family would be entitled to 40 rides throughout the case to attend court ordered services or to meet the obligations of the court. A needs assessment was developed to identify those with transportation needs. An enrollment
process was established that included embedding an expectation of developing long term transportation solutions and plans to reach these goals with clients.

The pilot process was approved by the committee and rides began being offered to clients in October 2018.

Eligibility for the pilot:

- Participant of Safe Babies Court
- Must not be filed as immediate termination
- Must be a family being referred to wraparound services
- Must meet all MODUS eligibility guidelines (Referred by a participating agency and between the ages of 13-24) MODUS will partner with Lyft if the client is over 24.

**Enrollment Process:**

- New family enters Tulsa Safe Babies Court team
- Referral to Wrap-Around
- Transportation needs assessed
- Eligibility assessed
  - Care Coordinator completes intake
  - Program Supervisor completes new client enrollment on Modus website
  - Modus forms completed
  - Develop long term transportation goals and a plan on how to achieve these goals

**Ride Process:**

- Need for ride identified
  - Care Coordinator completes transportation checklist
  - Current transportation resources are utilized
  - Modus ride initiated
    - Care Coordinator notifies Program Supervisor
    - Program Supervisor submits ride ticket on Modus website
    - Parent receives transportation from Modus to appointment
Data Tracking and Reporting:

Partnering service providers were asked to report on the impact the pilot made on the two outcome measures each month. They were asked to collect the following information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th># Visits Scheduled</th>
<th># Visits Attended</th>
<th># Visits missed</th>
<th>Due to Transportation Y/N</th>
<th>Pilot/Control</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Case outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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In addition, an evaluation questionnaire was created for both client and provider feedback on the pilot process. Each client and care coordinator was asked to respond to 3-4 questions after they completed the pilot.

The pilot ran from October 2018 (first ride utilized January 2019) through February 2020. A total of 12 clients (8 separate families) utilized the service.

Agency partners that contributed to the pilot protocol and data tracking included: DVIS, Family and Children's Services, Community Service Council, Tulsa Technology Center, Evolution Foundation, Safe Babies Court Team of Tulsa, Modus, Tulsa Public Schools, Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Oklahoma Department of Human Service, and Tulsa County Courts.

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**OUTCOMES:**

**REDUCTION IN MISSED APPOINTMENTS**

A total of 298 rides were scheduled during the pilot. Of those, 58 were cancelled or rescheduled and 10 were missed by the client.

- Clients were able to make several appointments in one day which helped in reduction of stress, time off work, and coordination of services.
- The consistency of drivers and supportive interactions led to clients feeling more hopeful and less likely to cancel appointments.

**INCREASED PARTICIPATION IN SERVICES**

Of those that participated in the pilot, 7 out of 8 families are working on reunification. Prior to the transportation pilot being offered, the average reunification was 50%, with those that were receiving wraparound services.

- The success of making appointments regularly built the clients' confidence.
- Clients learned to advocate for their needs regarding appointment scheduling.
A lack of transportation to attend scheduled appointments greatly reduces a parent's ability to satisfy court ordered obligations and delays or hinders a parent's chance to reunify with a child that is in state custody. Eliminating this barrier is crucial to the success of a care plan, however the capacity of a care coordinator to provide this service is costly. Through this pilot, it was identified that the success of making regular appointments built self confidence and improved the clients outcomes. The caring drivers that helped by offering a smile and often a word of encouragement became part of the team supporting the parent. This led to fewer cancelled rides and a sense of accountability. Data shows that reducing the barriers and providing for basic needs is the foundation for hope, and hope is the foundation for healing.

The goal of the pilot was to decrease the number of missed appointments and increase the rate of participation in services. Through the partnership with Modus and the cooperation with Family and Children's Services and OKDHS Child Welfare the rate of participation increased and the court saw an improvement in overall outcomes for the families. The overall cost savings is immeasurable. By shortening the length of time in state custody, improving no-show rates with service providers, and minimizing the time that is calculated by a care coordinator to provide transportation or manage the case due to low participation it is clear that there is a significant financial benefit. The overall benefit to the families and children stretches past a dollar amount and can change the trajectory for a family for a lifetime.