

Senator Melissa Wiklund, Chair
Senate Health and Human Services Committee

March 14, 2024

Mister Chair and Members of the Committee

Ramsey County Assertive community treatment (ACT) means intensive nonresidential treatment and rehabilitative mental health services provided according to the assertive community treatment model. Assertive community treatment provides a single, fixed point of responsibility for treatment, rehabilitation, and support needs for clients. Services are offered 24 hours per day, seven days per week, in a community-based setting. ACT programs are certified by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) and contract with a host county. ACT services are provided as a team-based model

Ramsey County provides a spectrum of mental health and substance use disorder services to our communities as a “one stop shop,” including care in assertive community treatment (ACT) services.

- Number of years providing ACT? 18 years. Since 2006?
- Number of ACT teams-One
- Number of clients accessing ACT (if you have it)-58
- Clients’ experiences benefiting from ACT-One of the key aspects that our clients have found particularly valuable is the convenience and support provided by having psychiatry and nurses come to their homes for monitoring symptoms. This personalized approach has not only enhanced their sense of comfort but has also facilitated timely interventions when needed. Knowing that there is always someone available to address concerns has been reassuring, contributing to overall well-being. Furthermore, clients have expressed appreciation for the comprehensive support offered by our multidisciplinary team Collaborating with a peer recovery specialist, who brings a unique perspective having experienced mental illness themselves, has fostered a sense of understanding and connection. Additionally, the involvement of a vocational specialist has been instrumental in assisting clients in their journey towards employment, empowering them to achieve their goals and enhance their sense of purpose. The cohesive teamwork among the team has played a significant role in delivering holistic care to clients. Clients can receive personalized support.
- The team is currently comprised of

Staffing

- Team Supervisor
- Psychiatric Provider
- Program Assistant
- Social Workers (2)
- Substance Use Disorder Specialists (2)
- Certified Peer Recovery Specialist
- Licensed Therapist
- Vocational Support Specialists (1)
- Nurses (2)

In this current workforce crisis and (state and national) mental health crisis, Ramsey County is further challenged in keeping access available to ACT services for our communities, spending staff time/energy away from care while trying to comply with prescriptive and sometimes conflicting regulations governing ACT.

- Challenges in delivering care (due to regulatory constraints)
please include what is applicable –
 - Rigid staffing and delivery hours
 - Geographic constraints (host county contract requirements?)
 - Arbitrary timelines for assessments (when not clinically necessary)

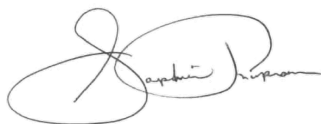
This legislation proposes changes many ACT providers and partners within the Mental Health Legislative Network hope will help us sustain access to our existing ACT programs across Minnesota for clients. Challenges in delivering ACT stem from regulatory constraints that limit the scope of services offered. While ACT aims to be an all-in-one service, regulatory restrictions may prevent the provision of certain therapies like EMDR or DBT. Moreover, clients may face difficulties accessing additional services like PCA, skilled nursing which is offered through waiver services. In many cases nurses provide time-unlimited, highly intensive support beyond what is provided by waived services. This support may also be outside expectations of the position but are practiced in keeping with a “whatever it takes” model.

Furthermore, a high frequency of staff turnover and vacant positions have limited active client recruitment. This led to a recent downsize from a large size to a mid-size team. The administrative burden of paperwork, which varies depending on one’s position, adds to the challenges. Additionally, the demanding nature of the job, characterized by a fast-paced environment and physical demands, further complicate service delivery. Also, rates are considered by expenses of the ACT team. This can fluctuate each year. In addition, several providers can see a client within one day. Only one of the services will be billable although clients are receiving care.

Acknowledging the good work, you and the legislature started last year to update our ACT program in Minnesota, Ramsey County looks forward to continuing working with you, the Department, and our other community partners in keeping our ACT program in Minnesota accessible our communities we are serving. We are hopeful this bill is the next step in that good work we can do with you all in the legislature to build a mental health regulatory system - overseeing ACT and other services - that can flex/ respond with the changing needs of our industry, and our communities.

Thank you for your leadership and support.

Sincerely,



Sophia Thompson

Social Services Deputy Director

Adult Support | Crisis & Stabilization | Mental Health Center

Social Services | Health and Wellness

651-266-4515

160 E. Kellogg Blvd., St Paul, MN 55101



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