Effectively Negotiating With Funders: 3 Tips for EBI Providers

1. BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Many providers note that building relationships with representatives of their county and Behavioral Health-Managed Care Organization (BH-MCO) over time creates a valuable foundation for funding negotiations. Through these relationships, providers can:

- Enhance funders’ interest and commitment to evidence-based programs.
- Increase funders’ understanding of a specific model.

Relationships are built through regular, meaningful contact. For instance, some providers have invited BH-MCO representatives to sit in on weekly supervision meetings, while others meet with funders on a quarterly basis to discuss program implementation issues.

2. SHARE PROGRAM IMPACT

Be prepared to show the local benefits of your program using valid and reliable data. Funders may be particularly interested in:

- Outcomes for youth and families served by your site.
- The quality of your site’s implementation of the model.
- The impact of program participation on youths’ future service utilization. Does participation in your program reduce the use of more intensive services later? Does it reduce further penetration into the child welfare, juvenile justice, and/or mental health systems?
- Cost-benefit for the funder and the community. Offer hard numbers, not generalities.
- Cost savings compared to “treatment as usual.”

3. PREPARE A BUDGET

Budget development should be a joint effort involving fiscal staff as well as staff with a strong understanding of the evidence-based model and its implementation. Some general tips:

- When projecting annual productivity, use conservative estimates of team-size and caseload, taking into account therapist time-off as well as client cancellations/no-shows. Have a clear understanding of what activities the funder allows to be billed prior to finalizing your budget. The Collaborative Funding Plan offers a list of activities to consider and can serve as a guide for discussion.
- Justify requests for rate increases with detailed profit/loss information from your fiscal department.
- Be prepared to share data on how staff spends their time, including time spent on billable versus non-billable activities. A staff time survey can be used to gather data about time spent on travel, documentation, and supervision, as well as clinical contacts.
- Maximizing allowable administrative costs helps ensure there is sufficient funding for the clerical and administrative support the program needs.
- Clearly identify what aspects of the model are covered by each funder (i.e., “allowable costs”).

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