

# AHEC Update

NORTH CAROLINA AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTERS

## The State of Mental Health in North Carolina

Experts estimate that more than one half-million people in North Carolina suffer from some type of mental illness. About half do not receive treatment, including those with serious mental disorders (*News & Observer*, 2/26/08). Barriers to care include inadequate insurance coverage, poor financial resources for patient co-payments, the perceived stigma of mental illness and its treatment, and inadequate supply or poor distribution of mental health clinicians, especially psychiatrists (Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research, UNC-Chapel Hill).

### AHEC's Response

The NC AHEC Program is preparing new practitioners to address workforce shortages and providing continuing education for current health practitioners on emerging best practices in the care of persons with mental health diagnoses. Some examples include: providing funds for NC's four academic psychiatry departments to successfully implement innovative resident training programs in areas such as Latino health, child health and telepsychiatry, partnering with UNC-Chapel Hill School of Nursing to prepare psychiatric nurse practitioners to diagnose and treat psychiatric illness, and developing a mental health specialty within the Duke Physician Assistant Program. More examples of new AHEC mental health initiatives are below.

### NEW MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES: SERVING NORTH CAROLINA NOW

#### Returning Citizen Soldier Veterans and Their Families

More than 12,000 NC National Guard and Reserve men and women have served our country in Iraq and Afghanistan. The NC AHEC Program, with leadership from South East AHEC (SEAHEC), is partnering with the Citizen-Soldier Support Program at UNC-Chapel Hill to:

- Provide urgently needed training on such topics as post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury to more than 1,000 mental health providers and primary care practitioners annually
- Provide comprehensive, specialized, replicable and sustainable health and mental health services to returning citizen soldiers using the integrated care model at primary care practices in rural Western North Carolina
- Create and distribute online tutorials targeted to the needs of primary care health providers for education on mental health and adjustment needs of returning veterans and their families



Continuing education workshops, podcasts, and online programs are available to health care professionals in North Carolina through the efforts of mental health education directors in all nine AHECs. For more information, contact Sheryl Pacelli at [sheryl.pacelli@seahec.net](mailto:sheryl.pacelli@seahec.net) or (910) 792-5560.

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New Mental Health Initiatives continued...

### North Carolina Evidence Based Practices Center

The NC Evidence Based Practices Center (NCEBPC), created with a grant from The Duke Endowment, is a collaboration of Southern Regional AHEC, the NC AHEC system, Duke University, the NC Division of MH/DD/SAS, and other university partners. All nine NC AHECs participate to deliver evidence based practices training in their regions, assist with workforce development efforts, offer technical assistance and promote consultation with faculty to implement the new practices. The center uses existing training toolkits developed by a national team of experts in addition to local and national experts in various content areas. Evidence based practices include: Assertive Community Treatment, Supported Employment, Family Psycho-Education, Wellness (Illness) Management and Recovery, Integrated Dual Disorder Treatment, and Therapeutic Foster Care. The NCEBP Center ([www.ncebpcenter.org](http://www.ncebpcenter.org)) was presented a Project of Excellence Award at the 2008 AHEC National Conference.

**NC Evidence Based Practices Center**  
4,749 providers in North Carolina have received training in 335 classes.  
30 faculty experts in North Carolina have been developed through train-the-trainer programs.

### Integrated Care Initiatives

Growing evidence indicates that North Carolinians benefit from more frequent, productive, and efficient collaboration among primary care providers and providers of mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse services. As a key member of the NC Integrated Care Partnership ([www.icarenc.org](http://www.icarenc.org)), AHEC provides online learning, conferences, and Web-based resources for primary care providers. Pediatric and adult care topics include bipolar disorder, ADHD, depression, and anxiety. A Certificate Program in Primary Care Behavioral Health trains licensed mental health professionals to work in primary care settings. AHECs assist the ICare partnership to develop new models of care, including clinical consultation, to improve access to mental health services in rural and underserved communities of North Carolina.

### Continuing Education

In 2007-2008, there were 600 AHEC programs for mental health continuing education, with 20,000 participants. Highly sought-after topics in AHEC mental health continuing education include: ethics, youth gangs, severe and persistent mental illness, psychopharmacology, cultural diversity, and sex offender treatment. Popular topics in children's mental health are: autism, ADHD, developmental disabilities, depression and suicide, psychiatric disorders, intervening with children in crisis, sexual abuse, anger treatment, and substance abuse. A searchable list of topics offered by all NC AHECs can be found by visiting the statewide CE calendar at [my.ncahec.net/education.php](http://my.ncahec.net/education.php).

For more information about the AHEC mental health programs, contact the AHEC nearest you.

## North Carolina Area Health Education Centers

#### Area I AHEC

Rocky Mount  
[www.areasahhec.org](http://www.areasahhec.org)

#### Charlotte AHEC

Charlotte  
[www.charlotteahec.org](http://www.charlotteahec.org)

#### NC AHEC Program Office

145 N. Medical Drive  
CB 7165  
UNC-Chapel Hill  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599  
919.966.2461  
[www.ncahec.net](http://www.ncahec.net)

#### Eastern AHEC

Greenville  
[eahec.ecu.edu](http://eahec.ecu.edu)

#### Greensboro AHEC

Greensboro  
[www.gahec.org](http://www.gahec.org)

#### Mountain AHEC

Asheville  
[www.mahec.net](http://www.mahec.net)

#### Northwest AHEC

Winston-Salem  
[northwestahec.wfubmc.edu](http://northwestahec.wfubmc.edu)

#### South East AHEC

Wilmington  
[www.seahec.net](http://www.seahec.net)

#### Southern Regional AHEC

Fayetteville  
[www.southernregionalahec.org](http://www.southernregionalahec.org)

#### Duke AHEC Program

Durham  
[dukeahec.mc.duke.edu](http://dukeahec.mc.duke.edu)

#### Wake AHEC

Raleigh  
[www.wakeahec.org](http://www.wakeahec.org)