

# Transformation Transfer Initiative Final Report: Nevada



Interview conducted on: May 26, 2021

Interviewee: Ellen Richardson-Adams, Outpatient Administrator, Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public and Behavioral Health, Southern Nevada Adult Mental Health Services

1. *When did you launch your 2020 TTI, and how long has it been operational?*

Were able to start in September of 2020, and we have been operational this entire time.

2. *How has COVID-19 impacted your project? What adaptive practices or efforts have aided you in overcoming these challenges?*

We got a delayed start, and we also had to be more creative about how we were going to carry out our project. COVID-19 has meant continual thinking outside the box and problem solving. For example, one of our key partners was the court system, which is still operating virtually. Because we attend court for our criminal and civil populations, we had thought we would bring incentive items with us and hand them out to clients after their court dates. Distributing tangible items reinforces the token economy system, and the courts have always been invested in that model.

That was, of course, not possible when the court dates were taking place online. This led us to a different method, and now our clients receive their incentives after attending their medical appointments.

For the most part, we have also remained operational in person because we are the safety net provider. The population we serve is either uninsured, under-insured, or uninsurable. Oftentimes, they have no cell phone, and often they have no video option for telemedicine. Alternatively, they may have received a phone with only limited minutes through the ACA and they may not be motivated to use those few minutes for telehealth.

If telehealth is wanted, we do honor that. That is another instance where we had to get creative, and we will now mail out gift cards if necessary.

3. *How many individuals have participated in your TTI at time of this interview?*

1,304 have participated.

4. *How much has been paid in incentives at time of this interview?*

\$37,267.60 has been paid.

5. *Have there been changes to your key partners and/or target population?*

Yes, there have been changes. The courts and detention centers are still our key partners although, as noted, we have had to re-strategize how to work with them.

At the same time, we have found that \$150,000 has been a lot to spend, and this has led us to expand our partnerships. We are now working with more hospitals and more courts than originally proposed in our grant. We were originally planning only to provide incentives to people released from our hospital, but we are now reaching out to clients released from any of the community hospitals. Similarly, we have expanded the number of courts we engage with.

We have appreciated the flexibility of this grant which has allowed us to continue to brainstorm and respond to emerging needs.

6. *Do you plan to make incentives a part of your behavioral health system moving forward? If so, how will you achieve sustainability?*

We definitely plan to make incentives a part of our behavioral health system moving forward. We have experienced some retirements in the midst of COVID, and I am personally now overseeing 22 outpatient clinics statewide; I was overseeing five at the beginning of this grant. From what I have seen, I now want to expand to rural frontier areas and offer incentives statewide.

Our state budget session closes next week. Nevada is on a biennium schedule, so we will not have another budget hearing for 2024 to 2025 until spring of 2023. That gives us some time to brainstorm and figure out how we can submit our funding request to the State of Nevada as an enhancement unit under state general funds. We will have data from this grant to support our request moving forward.

7. *Do you have any meaningful anecdotes regarding your programs that you can relay to us? (I.e., testimonials from participants, creative solutions)*

Getting positive feedback from the clients is wonderful: the smiles, their engagement in the program. They have made suggestions to us of what the gifts should be. We were told that socks would be great. Clients also came up with the idea of receiving dog tags that have a medical alert with a call number on the back in case a person is actively psychotic. These dog tags worked to keep two individuals from being put in jail this past spring; we received calls and were able to pick clients up and bring them to the doctor.

We also offered clear, anti-fogging face masks for people in counseling. This allowed them to take part in face-to-face counseling and the counselors could read their facial expressions. These masks were very well received.

We see our clients as they come through our front door, and it is not a one and done with these incentive items. Clients are not losing or throwing away their items. They are coming back again with their water bottles and wearing their lanyards with their keys and appointment cards. We also see them as they walk out after receiving an item, and they have an excitement and a strut. An incentive item is positive behavioral feedback.

*8. Do you see the incentives working to help individuals make follow-up appointments?*

Yes, we do. The allowability for an additional \$75 in total payments for follow-up appointments has, in particular, played a key role. From a behavior management point of view, it reinforces that clients show up at further appointments. In January, our compliance was about 82% which was much higher than what it had been originally before we started with this grant. Especially given the pandemic, our program is demonstrating success.

*9. What has this federal investment given your state system that would not have happened without it?*

Token economies have been proven to work in the early childhood realm, and we believed they could also work with adults. This project has given us the opportunity to show that token economies do, in fact, work with adults. This project has also given us the seed money to demonstrate success, and hopefully the data we have collected will spark an interest to sustain this incentive system.

*10. What do you plan to do with any residual funds?*

We plan to spend all of our funds as token incentives. Items we are giving away include umbrellas, beanies, socks, thermoses, water bottles, bus passes, and also gas cards.