Over a 20-month period, the National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP) convened multi-agency teams from Alabama, Colorado, and Massachusetts in a learning collaborative focused on developing processes for evidence-based health policymaking with a specific focus on patient-centered outcomes research (PCOR) and comparative effectiveness research (CER).

Massachusetts focused on developing a strategy for meaningful engagement of patients and stakeholders in state agencies’ program and policy development by identifying, advancing, and sharing best practices for consumer engagement in policymaking. The state team included a consumer engagement liaison who offered a valuable dual perspective as both a member of the recovery community and a state official.

**Participating Agencies and Organizations**

- Department of Mental Health (DMH)
- Department of Public Health (DPH)
- Executive Office of Elder Affairs
- University of Massachusetts Medical School
- At least one patient or consumer representative

**Accomplishments**

- Conducted needs assessment survey of Medicaid Agency, Department of Mental Health, Department of Developmental Services, and Department of Public Health regarding current structures for engaging persons served by agencies in their policy development process.
- Conducted community listening sessions for input on which evidence-based practices to include in the Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers demonstration.
- Convened evidence-based policy work group with active participation by leaders in mental health peer community.
- Established Department of Public Health Suicide Prevention Community Advisory Board.
Challenges and Lessons Learned
Over the course of the learning collaborative, the Massachusetts team experienced turnover due to retirement, highlighting the need for annual training on consumer engagement, i.e. “once is never enough”, to sustain a culture of inclusion. In addition, Massachusetts has identified procurement language requiring active consumer engagement to be a useful tool to advance a culture of inclusion of consumers and persons served in policymaking. Finally, it is important to recognize people served have their own needs and expectations and to create a welcoming environment for people with lived experiences of health conditions.

Technical Assistance Highlights
November 2016 Site Visit: Evidence-Informed Health Policy Workshop with the Center for Evidence-based Policy (CEbP)
- Diversity of perspectives including DMH Youth Development Council, DPH Suicide Prevention Program, State Mental Health Planning Council, and Executive Office of Elder Affairs.
- Strong consumer and peer representation.
- Presentation from two PCORI Ambassadors on the importance of and effective strategies for engaging stakeholders.

Throughout the learning collaborative, state teams received individualized technical assistance through bi-monthly calls with NASHP. One highlight from Massachusetts’ calls was a discussion with the Deputy Director of Patient Engagement at the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI).

About the National Academy for State Health Policy:
The National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP) is an independent academy of state health policymakers working together to identify emerging issues, develop policy solutions, and improve state health policy and practice. As a non-profit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to helping states achieve excellence in health policy and practice, NASHP provides a forum on critical health issues across branches and agencies of state government. NASHP resources are available at: www.nashp.org.

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