**Needs Analysis for Change**

Name

Institution

Course

Instructor

Date

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**Summary of the Economic Issue**

Limited accessibility of mental health care in underserved areas is one of the major economic issues that affect people and healthcare systems. Many people in these areas depend on emergency departments for mental health issues as they cannot afford preventive intervention (Suganya & Suresh, 2024). This leads to the development of poor health and escalating health care costs. From my practice, this is one of the most pressing concerns that cause a lot of stress on people and the healthcare system. My colleagues and I manage mental health crises using limited access to preventive care. In the organization, more resources are devoted to resolution of crises than to long-term solutions and this translates into increased organizational expenses coupled with reduced quality. Emotional and financial cost is also felt by families whose members require care, especially when care they receive is substandard or unavailable.

**Rationale for Pursuing this Issue**

This issue was selected because it clearly defines a problem which is devastating to individuals, communities and the health systems. Mental health is an important part of the wellbeing but unfortunately not everyone can afford to seek help. The funding gap of poorly-paid community mental health services, which does not let the underprivileged access affordable care, contribute to cycles of emergency intervention and billed services (Suganya & Suresh, 2024). Solving this problem is necessary for promoting the availability of preventive measures, decreasing expenses, and enhancing the quality of life among people and the population in general. From my professional experience, the need for increasing access to affordable mental health services is evident because the existing model is unsustainable for both healthcare facilities and families. This way, the health of the population will be enhanced and health cost in the long run reduced.

**Socioeconomic and Diversity Disparities**

The limited accessibility of mental health care is a challenge that mostly affects low-income populations and communities of color. These people are in the group of people with no health insurance and cannot afford mental health services. Another factor that hinders those affected from seeking help is cultural stigma in mental health. Research conducted by Fung et al. (2023) points that Black and Hispanic adults are rarely seek mental health care services as their White counterparts even when they have similar income and insurance. Locally, people with lower levels of income seek frequent emergency services more often due to mental health issues. People living below the poverty line spend more on their mental health, particularly the emergency level, which is an implication of the financial and societal costs of the inequality.

**Evidence-Based Findings on the Need for Change**

Evidence shows that the issue of limited access to mental healthcare in underserved populations is highly relevant. Strengthening preventive mental health care services reduces costs and improves the quality of life in the long-run. Colizzi et al. (2020) highlights that one of the key advantages is the need for developing mental health in the context of community preventive care. Patients who receive early preventive care are 30% less likely to require high-cost interventions. Additionally, Morales et al. (2020) argue that the mental health services need to be extended to the rural areas as majority of adults with mental health issues do not receive treatment because services are expensive and sparingly available. Expanding the availability of mental health treatment is not only beneficial for the patient in terms of stabilized worsening of the condition, or for the family who will not have to bear the costs for the aversive expensive emergency treatments, but also is cost-effective for the overall economy. This is because, many more of these patients would end up costing billions of dollars for emergency treatments if they did not have access to psychiatric services.

Also, research by Naslund et al. (2021) assessed the effects of servicing the scale-up of mental health in low-resource settings on the economy. The review stated that for every dollar that is invested in services related to mental health, society benefits with $4 worth of gains in production and lowered costs on billable healthcare. This finding adds credence to the economic argument for investing in mental health facilities especially in communities that are most affected. Furthermore, De Kock et al. (2021) researched the impact of the lack of mental health staff, and the conclusion reached proved that insufficient staffing in mental health services increases the readmissions rate and the frequency of emergency response visits. This also resonates with the fact that a lack of mental health professionals leads to early interventions with mental health emergencies. Address this shortage will enhance the health status of individuals and decrease the burden on the healthcare system.

**Predicted Outcomes and Opportunities for Growth**

Increased funding for community-based mental health services may help decrease healthcare costs and increase positive patient health outcomes by decreasing the use of emergency services. Preventive services are cheaper, and enhancing quality of life through early diagnosis and treatment of mental illnesses. More funding could also employ mental health specialists, which will help boost the economy in the area (Suganya & Suresh, 2024). Increased service provisions would increase workforce efficiency, dynamics and presence at work, decrease absenteeism adopting health enhancing approaches while focusing on integrated care for mental and physical health.

Conclusively, limited accessibility to mental health services in underserved communities is a real and pertinent economic concern. These gaps in access further point to the need to address disparities for low income and minority clients in need of these services. Research information substantiate that asserting preventive services in health care setting is feasible and cost efficient, and its resolution beneficially impacts on health status and health care costs. Through closing the funding gap, it helps to reduce health inequalities and support economic growth at the same time.

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