

# Measurement of Mental Health Treatment Outcomes with ACORN

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## The Need

Verity needed a consistent measure of mental health treatment outcomes across all systems of care. In the fall of 2008, we reviewed many tools, and selected A Collaborative Outcomes Resource Network (ACORN) to pilot. Before putting out a Request for Proposal (RFP), we piloted the ACORN to determine its utility and applicability within an Oregon Health Plan (OHP) population.

## The Pilot

Five community mental health agencies volunteered to be in the pilot, which began in July 2009. Twelve months later, we needed more data to confidently determine the utility of ACORN in the OHP/Verity population. The pilot has been extended through June 2011, and nine additional agencies serving both children and adults have since joined.

## The Cost & Benefits

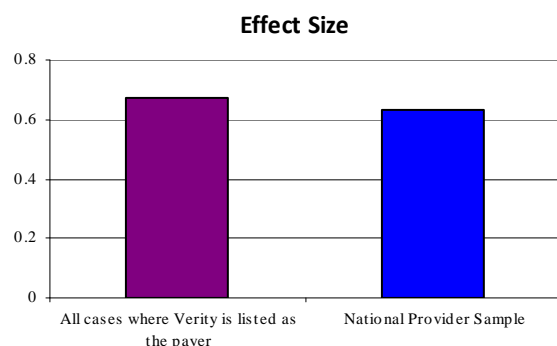
With over 300 clinicians and 1,000 forms processed monthly, Verity pays roughly \$5,000 each month. Unit costs decrease as volume increases. The main benefits of ACORN can be identified as either clinical or system-wide. Clinically, ACORN provides the clinician with information they may not otherwise obtain. System-wide, each clinician, program, agency, and Verity as a whole have access to aggregate, objective measures of mental health treatment outcomes.

## The ACORN Tool

ACORN is a frequently administered client self-report outcomes tool. There are 14-18 questions answered with a 5-point Likert scale. The client completes the form in the waiting room prior to every appointment, and then reviews their answers with their clinician in the therapy session. The data is entered by faxing completed forms to a toll free 1-800 number.

## The Data

All data are available through a secure web-based “clinician toolkit.” Mental health treatment outcomes are measured with a statistical measure of pre-post symptom decrease after controlling for diagnosis, severity of symptoms, and other personal characteristics (severity adjusted effect size, SAES). An SAES above 0.5 is considered “effective.” Currently, Verity’s effect size is 0.66 (n=759), higher than a national provider sample. Client charts tracking client distress at each appointment are also available online.



## Moving Forward

Verity will release an RFP to contract for outcomes measurement services beginning July 2011. As each contract is renewed, language will be added requiring all Verity contractors to measure outcomes of mental health treatment.