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**NorthSTAR Provider Enrollment Survey
Report: NorthSTAR Directory
Individual Practitioner
12/4/01**

Basis for Study:

The Dallas Area NorthSTAR Authority (DANSA) is, as the Local Behavioral Health Authority, responsible for monitoring the behavioral health service delivery system in Collin, Dallas, Ellis, Hunt, Kaufman, Navarro and Rockwall Counties. Inherent in the monitoring process is an examination of the provider network available to individuals receiving behavioral health care via Medicaid or other public funds. Behavioral health care (mental health and substance abuse treatment) is currently provided through a managed care model in which ValueOptions serves as the behavioral health organization.

While the accuracy of any provider directory may be questioned, the NorthSTAR Provider Directory has come under particular scrutiny over the last two years. DANSA has received several complaints and inquiries since the inception of NorthSTAR regarding the accuracy of the Provider Directory. During the Fall of 2001, staff initiated a project in which the Independent Practitioners were contacted to ascertain their status in the NorthSTAR Provider Panel. Independent Practitioners were defined as providers not associated with a facility (i.e., SPN, CD facility.)

Prior to reporting the results, it is important to point out that DANSA, ValueOptions, nor the State, have received more than a hand full of complaints from consumers about the lack of Independent Practitioners. The exception is the lack of psychiatrists in counties other than Dallas. As with any insurance company, providers may simply choose to no longer accept ValueOptions' enrollees and, after making this choice, fail to notify the insurance company, often despite contractual requirements addressing notification. Thus, ValueOptions, like other insurance companies, may be unaware of any provider's decision to no longer accept its enrollees. Consequently, please exercise caution when interpreting these results. Staff was also not able to locate any national standards regarding the accuracy of a managed care organization's provider directory. Thus, there is no measure against which to measure ValueOptions'.

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The Provider Directory, provided electronically, by ValueOptions contained 440 individuals. Staff was able to contact 303. Staff limited their project to those Independent Practitioners listed in one of the seven counties of DANSA's catchment area.

One specific goal of the NorthSTAR pilot, *Increased Choice*, is directly impacted by the Provider Panel. Upon enrollment and periodically thereafter, enrollees receive an *Updated Provider Directory*. Generally members have three methods to learn of the providers from which to choose. These include: the Provider Directory, contacting ValueOptions or a "known" provider, or simply "word-of-mouth".

Although the majority of consumers receive services via the Specialty Provider Network (mental health agency providers) or Traditional Provider Network (substance abuse facility providers), individual practitioners provide alternative choices for behavioral health services and are important in measuring the depth and the capacity of the service delivery system. In measuring the performance of a managed care system, capacity and structure of the provider network is an important component.

Hence, the first step in examining the scope and capacity of the NorthSTAR network is to gain an accurate picture of its network. This report details the findings of the Provider Enrollment Survey of Individual Practitioners.

Methodology

Providers surveyed for this report are delineated in the most current (8/01) Provider Directory. ValueOptions' Provider Directory delineates 440 individual practitioners. This telephone survey was conducted by DANSA staff. Multiple attempts were made to contact every individual provider. Providers with whom contact was made were asked the following six questions:

1. Are you an independent practitioner or part of a larger group or agency?
2. If you are part of a group practice, what is the name of your practice?
3. Are you an active provider in the NorthSTAR network?
4. Are you currently accepting NorthSTAR patients?
5. Is there a limit to the number of NorthSTAR patients you will accept?
6. If yes, what is the limit?

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All providers who responded completed the survey. Overall response rates are included in Table 1:

Table 1: Survey Response Rates

Response	# Providers
No Response	137
Survey Completed	298
Phone # Not In Service	2
No longer with employer	3
Total	440

Practitioners no longer employed at the telephone number listed or those phone numbers not in service, are classified as not actively participating in the NorthSTAR network. *The response rate for Providers located within the NorthSTAR Region is just over two thirds (69%) of listed providers.*

Licenses, as identified by ValueOptions, have been aggregated by comparable types to allow for meaningful analysis. For practitioners with more than one licensure, the highest level has been selected. For example, a practitioner listed as MD, LMSW, LCDC would be included in the MD/DO category. The licensure categories are as follows:

- ANRP
- EDD
- LCDC
- LPC/LMFT/LMSW-ACP
- MD/DO
- PHD
- PSYD
- RN

The majority (63%) of practitioners located in the NorthSTAR Region are LPC/LMFT/LMSW-ACP's. The remaining categories comprise approximately one third (37%) of practitioners. Some licenses (ANRP, LCDC, RN) have been combined into an Other category. Table 2 fully depicts Independent Practitioners, as delineated in the NorthSTAR Provider Directory, included in these licensure categories:

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Table 2 Individual Practitioners Located in the NorthSTAR Region by type

Licensure Category	# Practitioners
MD/DO	56
Psychologists	90
LPC/LMFT/LMSW-ACP	251
Other	05
Total	402

The differences in licensure makes it difficult to compare across categories. Table 3 illustrates the individual practitioners identified in the November NorthSTAR data book.

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Table 3 NorthSTAR Data Book Individual Providers Reported

NorthSTAR Individual Providers	Collin	Dallas	Ellis	Hunt	Kaufman	Navarro	Rockwall	Out of Area	Total	NorthSTAR Region Total
Psychiatrist	5	46	0	2	1	0	2	3	59	56
Psychologist	13	66	1	2	3	1	4	6	96	90
LPC, LMSW-ACP, LMFT	27	195	5	5	6	6	7	27	278	251
LCDC and Other	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	2	7	5
Total	46	310	7	9	10	7	13	38	440	402

Source: NorthSTAR Provide Directory; ValueOptions; August, 2001

Findings

In response to the question “Are you an active provider in the NorthSTAR network?” 179 of the 303 contacted (59%) responded positively.

Of the 179 practitioners who are active members of the network, 154 are accepting new NorthSTAR clients. Table 4 illustrates this group by Licensure type:

Table 4 Active NorthSTAR Practitioners Accepting New Patients by Licensure Type

Licensure Type	Total
MD/DO	6
Psychologists	17
LMFTs, LMSWs, LPCs	127
Other	4
Total	154

As Table 4 indicates, only six of these practitioners are MD’s and/or DO’s. Four individual MD/DO’s are located in Dallas and 1 each in Hunt and Rockwall Counties.

The number of practitioners accepting new patients (by county) indicates a limited availability of choice beyond the SPN’s in some counties. While not all individual practitioners were surveyed, the response rate is sufficient to estimate the total (all licensure categories) number of practitioners

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accepting new NorthSTAR referrals located in the NorthSTAR catchment area.

Table 5 Estimated Practitioners Accepting and Not Accepting NorthSTAR Clients by County

Collin County

	# Identified in Provider Directory	# Responding	# Accepting NorthSTAR	# Not Accepting NorthSTAR
MD/DO	5	5	0	5
Psychologists	13	5	2	3
LPC,LMFT,LMSW	27	22	15	7
Other	1	1	1	0
Total	48	33	18	15

Dallas County

	# Identified in Provider Directory	# Responding	# Accepting NorthSTAR	# Not Accepting NorthSTAR
MD/DO	46	37	6	31
Psychologists	66	16	14	2
LPC,LMFT,LMSW	195	183	113	70
Other	3	3	2	1
Total	310	239	135	104

Ellis County

	# Identified in Provider Directory	# Responding	# Accepting NorthSTAR	# Not Accepting NorthSTAR
MD/DO	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Psychologists	1	1	1	N/A
LPC,LMFT,LMSW	5	5	4	1
Other	1	1	1	0
Total	7	7	6	1

Hunt County

	# Identified in Provider Directory	# Responding	# Accepting NorthSTAR	# Not Accepting NorthSTAR
MD/DO	2	2	2	0

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Psychologists	2	2	2	0
LPC,LMFT,LMSW	5	5	3	2
Other	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	9	9	7	2

Kaufman

	# Identified in Provider Directory	# Responding	# Accepting NorthSTAR	# Not Accepting NorthSTAR
MD/DO	1	0	N/A	N/A
Psychologists	3	0	N/A	N/A
LPC,LMFT,LMSW	6	4	3	1
Other	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	10	4	3	1

Navarro

	# Identified in Provider Directory	# Responding	# Accepting NorthSTAR	# Not Accepting NorthSTAR
MD/DO	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Psychologists	1	1	1	0
LPC,LMFT,LMSW	6	6	1	5
Other	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	7	7	2	5

Rockwall

	# Identified in Provider Directory	# Responding	# Accepting NorthSTAR	# Not Accepting NorthSTAR
MD/DO	2	2	1	1
Psychologists	4	4	0	4
LPC,LMFT,LMSW	7	5	4	1
Other	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	13	11	5	6

Conclusion

The data gathered in this survey indicate that the NorthSTAR Provider Directory published in August, 2001 does not provide the member with an accurate listing of providers. Although it is recognized that this is generally true of any provider network, methods to improve the directory need to be explored.

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While individual practitioners seem to provide some choice for consumers (LPC/LMFT/LMSW-APC), the number of psychiatrists not associated with an SPN who are available is extremely low. The scarcity of psychiatrists, other than those associated with SPN's and University of Texas Southwest Medical Center/Parkland Psychiatric E.R (32), raises questions about the availability of the service in the catchment area. The thirty-two physicians associated with UTSW Medical Center and Parkland Psychiatric Emergency Room do not see patients independently.

Generally speaking, the expected patient load in many rural communities is not enough to support a full time psychiatrist. Many community mental health centers employ psychiatrists either on a part time basis or assign them to cover multiple counties. The primary impact of this small number is a reduction/elimination of patient choice if the patient wanted to receive care in his/her own community.

Recommendations

Recommendations from this report include the following:

1. Development of a way to consistently examine and update the Provider Directory
 - Example: Sending a notice to providers who have not billed in 30 days (few private providers can wait 90 days to submit a claim) and inform them that they will be dropped from the NorthSTAR Provider Panel if claims are not received within the next 60 days. Care should be exercised to insure that providers do not confuse ValueOptions' NorthSTAR and Commercial Panels and that withdrawal from the NorthSTAR Panel does not mean a withdrawal from ValueOptions' commercial panel.
2. Examine an incentive program for participation of psychiatrists in non-Dallas Counties:
 - For example: Differential rate structure; incentive for paperwork;
 - Exploration of tele-medicine to provide psychiatric services in under-served communities.
3. Explore the potential of an itinerant team that can service more than one county.
4. Identification of areas and provider types in need of network expansion and a definitive action plan with specific strategies and target dates for resolving the problems identified in this report.

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5. Development of meaningful, measurable indicators and associated benchmarks to measure the adequacy of the scope and capacity NorthSTAR Provider Network.
6. Conduct an in-depth survey of the independent practitioners, particularly psychiatrists, to ascertain the exact reasons for electing to either cease or diminish participation in NorthSTAR and develop associated strategies to remedy the concerns expressed on the survey.