Children’s Mental Health Matters

One in five children and youth in the United States have a diagnosable mental disorder and an estimated 4.5 to 6.3 million children and youth suffer from a serious mental health condition (about 10 percent). In Texas, this represents over 600,000 children, youth, and families impacted by mental health needs before age 18. The majority of these children (58 percent) do not receive mental health services, and many of the children and youth who do access services do so through the education, child welfare, or juvenile justice systems. What is the consequence of failing to meet the needs of children, youth, and families with serious mental health challenges? Children with unmet mental health needs are at increased risk of failing academically, becoming unemployed or homeless, abusing alcohol and drugs, and having chronic health and mental health conditions in adulthood. When families lack access to intensive, effective, community-based services, they are faced with seeking services in high-cost, restrictive settings, such as ERs and hospitals, residential treatment centers, and correctional facilities, sometimes by turning to the child welfare or juvenile justice systems. But effective community-based systems can be created to meet the needs of children and families.

A Framework for Community-Based Care

The system of care framework was designed to provide effective services and supports that enable children and youth with mental health challenges and their families to function well in their homes and communities and to lead productive lives. The concept is based on a philosophy that emphasizes services that are community-based, family-driven, youth-guided, individualized, coordinated, and culturally and linguistically competent. In 1992, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) launched a competitive grant program, known as the Children’s Mental Health Initiative, to translate this framework into system transformation and concrete services for children, youth, and families. To date, SAMHSA has invested more than $1.6 billion to 173 communities in all 50 states. Texas has received six community grants amounting to more than $20 million invested in system of care. Over the past decade, the system of care approach has increasingly been adopted by behavioral health, child welfare, education, juvenile justice, and health systems serving young children, youth, and families.

www.txsystemofcare.org
System of Care Gets Results

A national, multi-site evaluation of the over 113,000 children served in the Children's Mental Health Initiative has demonstrated that the system of care framework is effective.

System of care has been shown to:

» Increase the behavioral and emotional strengths of children and youth;
» Reduce behavioral and emotional problems;
» Increase child and youth functioning;
» Reduce anxiety in children and depression in adolescents;
» Increase school attendance and school performance;
» Reduce violent crimes, property crimes, and status offenses;
» Reduce the use of alcohol and cigarettes in adolescent participants;
» Reduce strain and stress for caregivers;
» Reduce the number of children with multiple out-of-home placements; and
» Avoid costs across child-serving systems by reducing inpatient services, residential treatment, and out-of-home placements.

Many of these outcomes have been achieved through key reforms to the mental health system.

The Children's Mental Health Initiative has led to:

» Stronger family and youth voice in system planning, oversight, and quality improvement;
» Greater access to intensive, community-based services and essential supports, such as respite, therapeutic behavioral supports, and parent and youth peer supports;
» Better access to culture-specific services and linguistically competent systems;
» Increased use of evidence-based mental health services and supports; and
» Redeployment of resources from high-cost, restrictive services to community-based and preventative services.

States that have adopted the system of care framework statewide have demonstrated:

» Increased access to mental health services for children and youth;
» Reduced use of residential care for children and youth;
» Maximization of the effective use of state and federal resources; and
» Reductions in the average annual cost for mental health services (New Jersey).

The comprehensive Texas System of Care strategic plan is available at www.txsystemofcare.org/strategic-plan-to-expand-systems-of-care
**System of Care is Improving Lives in Texas**

Six Texas communities have received cooperative agreements to implement the system of care framework. Some key findings from local evaluations follow.

The Children’s Partnership in Travis Country demonstrated:

- Sustainability for more than 10 years after grant funding;
- Fifty-five percent of the expenditures in Fiscal Year 2011 were flexible, blended funding;vi
- In 2012, 71 percent of children and youth decreased their participation in delinquent behavior; and
- Ninety-three percent of children and youth were able to remain in their community with no out-of-home placements.vii

Fort Worth Community Solutions found:ix

- High-fidelity wraparound facilitation was provided to 86 percent of families;
- Children and youth had fewer delinquent or self-harmful behaviors as a result of participation; and
- Caregivers reported significantly less worry, anger, resentment, lost work time and financial hardship.

Harris County’s System of Hope showed:vi

- Caregivers and youth rated services and service providers as culturally and linguistically competent;
- Individualized service planning (wraparound planning) can be done with high fidelity;
- Caregivers report less strain related to the youth’s behavioral health needs.

Tarrant and surrounding counties’ Hand in Hand found:x

- Young children participating had increases in protective factors;
- Young children had improvements in behavioral and emotional strengths;
- Ninety-five percent of respondents felt that the service provider attended to the family’s cultural needs.

“A Statewide Approach in Texas

Based on the results shown across the country, SAMHSA launched a competitive grant program for state systems interested in expanding the system of care framework. With a grant to the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, Texas has worked with families, youth, and system stakeholders to develop a sustainable strategic plan to expand this promising practice across the state. Texas is exploring strategies to foster champions for children’s mental health, develop infrastructure for workforce training, expand the use of evidence-based and promising practices, maximize service financing strategies, and support communities in system reform. Learn more about Texas System of Care at www.txsystemofcare.org.
Mission
To strengthen the collaboration of state and local efforts to weave mental health supports and services into seamless systems of care for children, youth and their families.

Vision
All Texas children and youth have access to high quality mental health care that is family-driven, youth-guided, community-based, culturally-grounded and sustainable.