August 20, 2015

Sherri Hammack  
Project Director  
Office of Mental Health Coordination  
Texas Health and Human Services Commission  
MC- 1155, 4th floor  
4900 N. Lamar  
Austin, Texas 78751

Dear Mrs. Hammack:

Enclosed is the Center for Mental Health Services, Child, Adolescent and Family Branch report of the federal site visit to the Texas State System of Care (TX SOC), conducted on July 28 through July 30, 2015. We trust that this report accurately and fairly represents the initiative.

We want to thank you and all the others who participated as part of the site visit. We recognize the hard work that goes into planning such a meeting and the site visit team appreciates the openness with which they were met and the cooperation and enthusiasm shown by all of the System of Care partners. This site visit helped provide clarity about the successes and challenges you have encountered in implementing this cooperative agreement. Below you will find the key recommendations.

**Key Issues and Recommendations**

*Meaningfully use social marketing and evaluation efforts to grow the system of care and promote sustainability.* Use existing and new data to educate and infuse system of care principles and values throughout the state and with key stakeholders, legislators, community leaders and youth and families by disseminating key findings through social media and other marketing efforts.

*Ensure that youth and family voices are encouraged and supported throughout all aspects of the system of care, including the consortium and working groups.* The site visit team recommends that the leadership and stakeholders of TX SOC develop and implement intentional strategies to increase youth and family involvement. Build upon the existing structure/work already in place to develop youth voice. There is a curriculum and guide for youth involvement that was developed, and a readiness tool completed. Collaborate with local efforts across the state that already have a strong family and youth engagement presence as well as adapt the current consortium structure to ensure that youth and families have a voice at the table and are involved in all decision-making aspects of the grant.
Partner with local independent school districts and juvenile justice to coordinate efforts and expand system of care services and supports. The site visit team recommends that the staff and leadership of TX SOC collaborate with local independent school districts and juvenile justice entities across the state to ensure a coordinated level of services that will increase the overall well-being of children and youth. Use existing data that has shown the effectiveness of such partnerships from the state and national level to increase buy-in and use existing and evolving trainings to increase education and outreach to new partners.

TX SOC has had many achievements during the first two years of the cooperative agreement. The employees, partners, and supporters included in the TX SOC initiative are to be commended for their work to create a statewide system of care.

The site visit team hopes that the observations and recommendations in this report will serve as a catalyst to continue moving the system forward, and to work towards sustaining the valuable progress this community has made. We look forward to working with you as you continue to develop your system of care to improve the lives of youth and young adults with mental health challenges and their families.

Sincerely,

Gary M. Blau, Ph.D.
Chief, Child, Adolescent and Family Branch

Kaitlyn Harrington
Project Officer

CC: Technical Assistance Network
National Communications Campaign
REPORT OF VISIT TO SYSTEM OF CARE COMMUNITY

Project location: Austin, Texas
Project name: Texas State System of Care
Date of visit: July 28-30, 2015
Date of Report: August 20, 2015
Project Director: Sherri Hammack
Principal Investigator: Molly Lopez

Site Visit Team:
Project Officer: Kaitlyn Harrington
Subject Matter Consultant: Nicole Attong
Subject Matter Consultant: Fred Sandoval

Purpose of the Federal Site Visit
Federal site visits to communities funded through the Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program are conducted as part of the technical assistance requirements in The Public Health Services Act, Public Law 102-321 as amended, Part E, Sections 561-565. These site visits typically occur in the second or third year of the cooperative agreement to determine the status of system development and to identify areas that would benefit from quality improvement activities. The site visits also provide an opportunity for the community to highlight policies and practices and to demonstrate their work in developing a community based system of care for children and adolescents with serious emotional disturbance. This site visit was conducted in the third year of the cooperative agreement.

Site Visit Process
The observations and recommendations detailed in this report resulted from a series of focused discussions conducted by the site visit team with the Texas State System of Care (TX SOC) key staff, families, youth, community partners and stakeholders. These groups shared information regarding the progress made since the initiative was funded in July 2013. Recommendations were formed after a series of meetings that took place over the course of three days. Each meeting had a specific focus that corresponded to the seven categories in the site visit protocol.

Overview of Texas State System of Care
The Texas Department of State Health Services was awarded a statewide system of care implementation grant in July 2013. Building on the lessons learned from the one-year SOC
planning grant, awarded in 2011, TX SOC intends to expand the use of the System of Care framework to all counties of the state by creating a statewide structure that includes a network of communities and state agencies that will work together to create and sustain the system of care approach.

The goal of TX SOC is to use the system of care values and principles statewide as the overarching approach to plan and deliver services and supports to children and youth with serious mental health conditions, and their families. The objective is to spread the system of care approach to more Texas children and youth in need — providing them with access to a coordinated, effective service delivery system.

The initiative will create a system of care roadmap for Texas by:

- Building upon existing community assets and supporting communities interested in improving outcomes and costs through a system of care framework.
- Identifying and strengthening policies and practices to support a strong system of care infrastructure.
- Establishing select community system of care projects to inform long-range planning and aid in a statewide rollout.
- Strengthening service delivery systems to children and families.
- Providing services that are culturally informed.
- Increasing family and youth voice in decision making at all levels.
- Providing statewide training in system of care values, principles and best practices.
- Building awareness and a strong voice for children’s mental health in Texas.

TX SOC is led by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, Department of State Health Services, and the University of Texas at Austin, Center for Social Work Research in collaboration with child-serving state agencies, family and youth advocacy organizations and other stakeholders within the Texas children’s mental health service delivery system.

**Site Visit Protocol Categories**
The following sections of the report correspond to the categories of the Site Visit Protocol, forming the basis for the discussion during the Federal Site Visit. Each section lists strengths, challenges and recommendations.

**Section I: System of Care Structure and Planning**
Throughout the last two years, and building off lessons learned from the planning grant, TX SOC leadership has developed a comprehensive strategic plan with the input from stakeholders, families, youth, and community leaders that drives their system of care efforts across the state.

The governance structure of TX SOC is led by the Texas System of Care Consortium, which is comprised of numerous stakeholders, including key staff from TX SOC, state employees from mental health, child welfare, juvenile justice and substance abuse, state legislators, area providers, family members, and project leads from current and graduated system of care sites. The consortium meets quarterly to discuss current activities and accomplishments, and to share lessons learned and brainstorm for future activities. The site visit team had the opportunity to
attend the meeting on July 28, 2015, which included a working session on next steps the consortium should take under new legislation that was passed in June, 2015 that will impact the consortium and lead to two possible new councils: the Behavioral Health Council and the Children’s Council, housed in the Health and Human Services Commission. The leadership and key staff of TX SOC are hopeful that this consolidation will serve to further embed and expand the SOC values and principles throughout the state of Texas. Other discussions at the meeting included: newly awarded grants and areas to reduce duplication of services; upcoming trainings, events and webinars, and a short film starring a family member from Houston, TX outlining her family’s experiences with mental health services and the support received as a result of the grant.

**Strengths**

- TX SOC has engaged a broad group of stakeholders that reflects the great diversity of Texas.
- New opportunities across state departments are shared regularly to eliminate duplication of efforts and ensure partnership on all levels.
- Graduated System of Care sites are actively involved in the decision-making and mentoring of new sites throughout Texas.
- Training is consistent and evolves with community needs. In addition, all trainings are inclusive and welcoming of new members.
- The Strategic Plan is comprehensive and guides all TX SOC activities. The plan is logical and actionable.
- Leadership of TX SOC addressed sustainability early and continues to address on an ongoing basis.
- There is a consistent reflective process among all grantee staff that allows the team and leadership to assess where they are and to help guide feedback to legislators. There is also a cohesive team environment that encourages outside opinions to improve system of care activities.
- One family member with lived experience sits on the consortium board and is a volunteer.

**Challenges/Recommendations**

- **Ensure that youth and family voices are encouraged and supported throughout all aspects of the system of care, including the consortium and working groups.** The site visit team recommends that the leadership and stakeholders of TX SOC develop and implement intentional strategies to increase youth and family involvement. Build upon the existing structure/work already in place to develop youth voice. There is a curriculum and guide for youth involvement that was developed, and a readiness tool completed. Collaborate with local efforts across the state that already have a strong family and youth engagement presence as well as adapt the current consortium structure to ensure that youth and families have a voice at the table and are involved in all decision-making aspects of the grant.
- **Increase outreach and engagement strategies to ensure youth and family engagement in all aspects of the grant.** The site visit team recommends that the leadership of TX SOC increase outreach and engagement strategies to recruit youth to participate in all aspects of the system of care. As decisions are being made about the direction of the system of care, youth and family voice should play an important and integral role.
Supportive strategies might include helping youth acquire school credit for their participation and to translate their work into experience on a resume, as well as offering transportation, childcare and refreshments. Explore the use of technology as a tool to facilitate participation across the state.

- **Expand and support existing workgroups around issues pertaining to the overall goals of the grant.** The site visit team recommends that the leadership and staff of TX SOC expand and support existing workgroups, such as the social marketing and evaluation workgroups, ensuring all voices are heard, particularly from youth and families, and to use existing resources across the state to partner with local workgroups around similar issues. For instance, the social marketing efforts in Tarrant County are strong and could impart valuable lessons to impact other communities across the state. Each of these workgroups should encourage meaningful youth and family participation in all aspects, as well as identify a strategic way to disseminate decisions and milestones to the leadership and staff of TX SOC and the consortium.

- **Get at least one youth with lived experience on the consortium without delay.** Meaningfully recruit, prepare and support at least one youth, preferably more, to participate on the consortium with voting ability without delay. Train and prepare the other members of the group quickly and effectively to ensure that they are adequately prepared to listen and respond in a positive way.

### Section II: Fiscal Management and Sustainability

The site visit team met with key staff of TX SOC. Funding and sustainability has been a focus of TX SOC since the beginning. Texas has maximized public and private funding to expand and sustain an effective system of care statewide. They have used financing structures such as the 1915(c) Medicaid Waiver (YES Waiver), a Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services Waiver that allows for more flexibility in the funding of intensive community-based services to assist children and adolescents with severe emotional disturbances to live in the community with their families, and the 1115 Medicaid Waiver to create sustainable efforts that expand services and supports statewide.

TX SOC has established strong partnerships with various state departments and key stakeholder groups in sustainability efforts, including the University of Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health, Via Hope – a family run organization, Texans Care for Children, and the Hogg Foundation, the latter two provide match and advocacy efforts on behalf of the grant.

Block grant funds and the 5% set aside for first episode psychosis help to advance early interventions. In addition, block grants are used to expand and support evidence based programs and trainings.

**Strengths**

- The leadership of TX SOC works in partnership with the state Medicaid offices to stay on top of new and existing funding streams to enhance their efforts.
- Statewide coordination of public mental health policy is overseen through the Office of Mental Health Coordination at the Health and Human Services Commission.
- Sustainability efforts are a constant focus.
Challenges/Recommendations

- **Continue and expand efforts related to block grants.** Block grants can help sustain and ensure supports after the grant. Further, when youth age out of the grant, services and supports offered by block grants may be able to fill in any gaps and ensure transition into adult services.

- **Coordinate with the Office of Minority Health around efforts to reduce uninsured individuals.** The Office of Minority Health (OMH) is coordinating with border states to help reduce the levels of uninsured. These efforts could help increase services and supports to one of the populations served by the grant.

- **Collaborate with the State Medicaid Office and analyze utilization data for managed care.** Given that managed care is new for both SOC and Wraparound in Texas, utilization data was not yet available. The site visit team recommends that the TX SOC leadership team, in collaboration with the state Medicaid office, conduct an analysis of the utilization data to evaluate outcomes and develop quality improvement strategies.

Section III: System of Care Services and Supports

The site visit team met with leadership and key staff of the grant, as well as with a local implementation site to review existing services and supports, as well as future goals. The leadership and staff coordinated with key stakeholders and partners to expand services and supports, which were implemented within the first year of the grant, including coordinating with existing and graduated system of care sites around the state.

Wraparound efforts began in 2011 under the planning grant and have since been implemented statewide. Billing for these efforts are done through extensive case management. Child serving agencies have been trained and are coordinating wraparound with the help of the grant. Approximately 60 youth have been involved in wraparound to date.

Residential treatment services are aligned with the Building Bridges Initiative core values and principles.

Family peer certified partners are required at all Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHAs) across the state of Texas within one year. This requirement was implemented in 2011. Via Hope, a partner of TX SOC, is the vehicle for certification. They conduct the training and provide the certification to each family peer partner. The YES waiver is being used to expand support for new partners.

The implementation site visited, Texas Tropical Behavioral Health (TTBH), which is partially funded by the grant, has a comprehensive facility that coordinates mental health services with primary care. Crisis services are in place with a 24-hour call in and support center, as well as a mobile crisis unit that provides support to the three counties served by TTBH. Intake can be done at the facility or at the individual’s home depending on the situation and the individual’s comfort level. TTBH has partnered with local police departments to better align services and supports.
**Strengths**

- Statewide implementation of wraparound with ongoing training and supports to the communities
- Strong local efforts at TTBH, including a mobile unit, 24 hour crisis support, in-home assessments, and integrated behavioral and primary care.
- Requirement of family peer certification at all LMHA’s across the state assures strong support for all individuals served.
- Adoption of Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) in residential care is increasing.
- Leadership and staff are committed to expanding services and supports across the state and continue to do so by evolving efforts, particularly around training and funding streams.
- All services and supports are provided in both Spanish and English.

**Challenges/Recommendation**

- **Partner with local independent school districts and juvenile justice to coordinate efforts and expand system of care services and supports.** The site visit team recommends that the staff and leadership of TX SOC collaborate with local independent school districts and juvenile justice entities across the state to ensure a coordinated level of services that will increase the overall well-being of children and youth. Use existing data that has shown the effectiveness of such partnerships from the state and national level to increase buy-in and use existing and evolving trainings to increase education and outreach to new partners.

**Section IV: Cultural and Linguistic Competency**

The site visit team met with the leadership and key staff of TX SOC, as well the local team at Texas Tropical Behavioral Health. Current cultural and linguistic competency (CLC) activities are evolving and focused on specific populations served across the state. The leadership and staff of TX SOC are also partnering with the Health and Humans Services Commission, the Center for the Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities, to expand cultural and linguistic competency efforts. This partnership includes relevant training and reduction in duplication of efforts.

**Strengths**

- The cultural and linguistic competency plan is integrated into the overall strategic plan of TX SOC.
- TX SOC has evolved work on cultural and linguistic competency as the community evolves and the populations become more diverse, including offering new and innovative training opportunities.
- 90% of staff at Texas Tropical Behavioral Health is bilingual, which is representative of the population served.
- Staff familiarity with culturally informed evidence based practices was very strong, including how to adapt existing tools for the population served.
- The outreach to colonias, a community or neighborhood along the Texas-Mexico border with little to no access to resources and services, using a mobile RV is very effective and intensive to serving border populations.
• Collaboration and coordination with the Center on Equity, Disparities and Disproportionality.

**Challenges/Recommendations**

- **Create a cultural and linguistic competency working group to address growing issues around population of focus.** The site visit team recommends the formation of a cultural and linguistic competency work group with broad stakeholder representation, including youth and families, to work in partnership with the staff and leadership of the TX SOC to address the goals of the grant. This workgroup could help look at behavioral health data specific to race, gender, ethnicity, age and other diverse characteristics to examine impact on serving underserved or diverse populations.

- **Expand and support current and new cultural and linguistic competency efforts.** Expanding upon existing efforts and identifying new ways to grow CLC efforts across the state should include adopting CLAS training strategies which are broader and comprehensively structured. TX SOC leadership should look for ways to provide support practitioners, promotoras and other staff, perhaps around key trainings and by offering CEUs.

- **Develop a cultural and linguistic competency plan and needs assessment.** The CLC integration throughout the system of care initiatives can be strengthened by conducting a CLC needs assessment and developing a CLC plan. This will help strategically guide work and to prioritize resources for efforts.

- **Coordinate with local communities that have existing and strong cultural and linguistic competency efforts.** Tropical Behavioral Health services can help train or advise state cultural and linguistic competency efforts by offering specific trainings at the state or by the local communities, around outreach, programs, policies and staff development.

**Section V: Public Education and Social Marketing**

The site visit team met with key staff from the TX SOC and members from Texas Tropical Behavioral Health. Social marketing and public education is a strong focus of the grant. TX SOC recently won three Excellence in Community Communications and Outreach (ECCO) awards for their achievements in public education and social marketing: outreach to professionals; outreach to internal constituents; and their social marketing plan strategy.

The Texas System of Care has created a public awareness campaign to support SAMHSA’s key messages: to raise awareness about the importance of children’s mental health and that positive mental health is essential to a child’s healthy development from birth. The three goals around social marketing and public education are:

1. Increase awareness and understanding among key audiences about the system of care approach and its benefits.
2. Use social marketing to engage youth and families from diverse backgrounds, and empower these critical partners to play a pivotal role in social marketing planning decisions so the resulting strategies are family-driven, youth-guided, and culturally and linguistically competent.
3. Provide social marketing support, consulting and materials to system of care communities.

The staff of TX SOC, in partnership with the University of Texas, is creating bilingual social marketing tools.

Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day is huge effort across the state. This past year’s events included walks around the city to raise awareness, kite flying, art contests, and presentations from key speakers on mental health topics.

The site visit team heard from the Texas Tropical Behavioral Health team about efforts around Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day, which included a large public education and outreach event in the communities with broad representation from key stakeholders, partners, county leaders, family and youth and other child serving providers. The event included information and education about suicide prevention and other mental health topics.

**Strengths**

- TX SOC has created a comprehensive and actionable social marketing plan that is updated regularly.
- Social marketing efforts and activities have been extensive.
- Three recent ECCO awards were received for their outreach campaign to professionals; internal constituents; and their social marketing plan strategy.
- Strong use of new media and evolving with the changing times, such as social marketing strategies through new media, outreach and education through various means that can be accessed in all communities throughout the state, and working with youth and families to identify best media to expand their outreach.
- TX SOC provides press releases and statewide voice to local community efforts to celebrate successes across the state.
- Strong partnership with the Texas Family Voice Network to identify barriers, develop plans and policies to help families market their own successes.
- There is support from key stakeholders and families and youth for the webinars produced through participation and helping with the creation of new webinars, which serve the communities spread out across the state.

**Challenges/Recommendations**

- *Increase youth involvement on the social marketing and public education working group.* The site visit team recommends that the leadership and staff of TX SOC support meaningful engagement of youth on the social marketing and public education working group.
- *Determine how to use evaluation data in social marketing efforts.* The site visit team recommends that the public education and social marketing staff of TX SOC collaborate with evaluation staff to use system of care outcomes in marketing efforts. For example, use social media to disseminate information out to the public quickly, such as successes and lessons learned to raise awareness from the public and gain buy-in from potential partners and stakeholders. This will increase stakeholder buy in and sustainability.
- *Translate all documents, resources and the website to Spanish.* As Spanish is the
second largest language in the state, the site visit team recommends that the staff and leadership of TX SOC consider directly translating all documents, resources and the website to Spanish instead of depending on electronic translator services, given that such tools are not yet able to address the various nuances of the Spanish language and therefore can result in inaccuracies.

Section VI: Training and Technical Assistance/Workforce Development
The site visit team met with leadership and key staff to discuss TX SOC’s efforts on training, technical assistance and workforce development. All training and technical assistance takes into account the community, youth and the families served. New trainings are voted on by the local communities and are focused on their needs. Current trainings include cultural and linguistic competency and governance structure for local communities.

Youth and families have created respective trainings and toolkits, and a readiness assessment tool that is in the works to be used with agencies and partners across the state.

In order to reach all of the communities in Texas, technology is strongly used, including Adobe Connect, to allow “face to face” meetings even when sitting on opposite ends of the state. This facilitates communication and assures that communities have an opportunity to participate at the state level.

The state has created a partnership with every graduated system of care site, as well as all newly funded sites, across the state to create a mentor relationship that allows state leaders and staff to gain knowledge from the lessons learned in the past, as well as to help education new communities as they come on board. Lessons learned are shared regularly.

Strengths
• Trainings for families are comprehensive and all inclusive, and include a peer partner certification process for all LMHAs across the state
• Trainings and toolkits have been created by youth and families for organizations to better prepare for having youth and families at the table in a meaningful way.
• Strong knowledge of existing evidence based programs and how to adapt them to their communities.
• Graduated system of care sites provide training and lessons learned to new committees and to state leadership.
• Use of technology to share information, trainings and technical assistance across the state is remarkable.

Challenges/Recommendations
• Develop training and technical assistance for youth served by the grant. During the session on training and technical assistance, it was identified that there is no training or technical assistance currently available for youth. Developing such efforts will enhance youth involvement and buy in, and will help with workforce development and sustainability efforts.
• Conduct a readiness assessment for organizations and partners around youth and family engagement. The staff and leadership of TX SOC have created toolkits and
trainings and other resources to prepare organizations for youth and family engagement; however, engagement is not being consistently applied in all aspects. Conducting a readiness assessment will help the staff and leadership of TX SOC better identify where additional training and technical assistance is needed around this important aspect of systems of care. The site visit team recommends the team develop and implement a plan based on the outcomes of the readiness assessment to prepare organizations across the state to meaningfully engage youth and families.

Section VII: Evaluation

The site visit team met with key staff and the evaluation lead of TX SOC. New and existing data are used to guide system-level decision making, and to develop and implement infrastructure, services and supports and technical assistance activities. There are several current and on-going projects that the evaluation team is currently working on, including:

- The creation of a system of care toolkit to ensure consistent messaging about evaluation efforts throughout communities in the state. This toolkit will have four objectives:
  - Objective 1: Key Stakeholder Interviews conducted to develop a needs assessment.
  - Objective 2: Social Network Mapping including current strength of relationship.
  - Objective 3: Based on strategic planning goals, relevant data collection plan developed.
  - Objective 4: Completion of the system of care implementation survey (SOCIS).
- System of Care adoption rating and readiness assessment tool to share with key partners and communities and assess the readiness of communities, as well as identify areas where additional training and outreach is needed.
- Caregiver survey to assess their level of satisfaction of services received.
- Wraparound data collection on implementation and fidelity is assessed statewide and results are used to educate TX SOC, new and existing stakeholders, and expand the initiative.
- Social network mapping in conjunction with the social marketing workgroup is conducted in collaboration with the youth and families to identify the effectiveness of social marketing efforts.

Reports are disseminated annually to the consortium, as well as key data points are shared regularly in e-blasts, on the website and other forms of social media as appropriate.

Strengths

- The leadership and staff of TX SOC are using evaluation data to track program outcomes, identify gaps in services and needs for improvement, as well as effectiveness and successes.
- Use of state and partner data is strong and comprehensive.
- A youth and family member with lived experience participates on the evaluation team.
- Evaluation of the statewide wraparound effort is strong and as is the use of fidelity measures to measure level of adherence to the model.
Challenges/Recommendations

- **Disseminate data to all key stakeholders, including the youth and family groups.** Currently, data is not disseminated widely, particularly with SOC partners and to youth and family groups. Sharing successes through data can increase buy in from all stakeholders to inform practice and implementation efforts.

- **Collect data on special populations including LGBT youth.** No data is currently being collected on the LGBT population across the state. The site visit team recommends that the staff and leadership of TX SOC consider adding this population to the disparities report and collecting data to increase awareness and supports for this population.

Summary

TX SOC is a cooperative agreement being used to expand the system of care framework throughout Texas to meet the needs of youth with serious mental disorders and their families. The federal site visit team observes that TX SOC has made much progress in implementation of the system of care since funding was awarded in 2013. The staff is passionate and committed to the work, and partnerships have been developed throughout the state that have helped to strengthen implementation of the system of care framework.

TX SOC is to be commended for its creative and innovative efforts to provide and ensure access to effective services throughout the state. The outreach that TX SOC has made to engage all 254 counties on board in system of care in such a short amount of time is remarkable. Local communities, such as TTBH, are a testament to the tremendous work that is being done on the ground to bolster access and awareness of mental health services and supports. The family peer partner certification process, spearheaded by Via Hope, is excellent and strengthening family voice all over the state. Evaluation, social marketing and cultural and linguistic competence efforts are strong and moving forward to help sustain the efforts of TX SOC.

The site visit team has provided a number of recommendations to support the on-going development of the system of care, including the further inclusion of family and youth voice, the expansion of partnerships with schools and the juvenile justice system, and the meaningful use of data in social marketing efforts.

The team trusts that the leadership and stakeholders of TX SOC will review and implement these recommendations with the enthusiasm they demonstrated during this review.