


Expanding the **Framework** for Developing, Operating, & Sustaining Local Systems of Care



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What is a “System of Care?”

A system of care is a comprehensive spectrum of mental health and other necessary services which are organized into a coordinated network to meet the multiple and changing needs of children and adolescents with severe emotional disturbances and their families.



Role of System of Care

To provide access to effective services for a large and diverse population within a specified community.


Reason for System of Care


To make it possible for effective services to be delivered – unless such services are embedded in a facilitative system, it will be difficult to deliver them.

What Should a System of Care be Based Upon?



- A vision, and set of values, and principles developed and agreed upon by community stakeholders;
- A clear definition of the population to be served and a thorough understanding of the population to be served;
- A set of goals and desired outcomes, also developed and agreed upon by community stakeholders;
- Best available evidence on effectiveness of system mechanisms, and services;
- A theory of change that makes explicit the link between interventions (at the system, organization, program, provider, and child/family levels) and desired outcomes







Key Principles/Values of a System of Care

- Based on needs of child and family
- Promotes partnerships between families and professionals
- Involves collaboration between multiple agencies and service sectors
- Involves provision of individualized supports and services based on strengths and needs in multiple domains
- Promotes culturally responsive supports and services
- Includes system of ongoing evaluation and accountability



"The earmark of a quality program or organization is that it has the capacity to get and use information for continuous improvement and accountability. No program, no matter what it does, is a good program unless it is getting and using data of a variety of sorts, from a variety of places, and in an ongoing way, to see if there are ways it can do better."

— Weiss, 2002



Systems of Care as Changing, Evolving Entities

- From primarily outpatient and inpatient/residential services to expanded continuum of services;
- From almost exclusively funding programs of services to creating flexible funds to support individualized care;
- From small percentage of funds being kept flexible to creation of care management entities with expanded flexible funds to purchase individualized services.



Other Possible Principles:

- Access
- Voice
- Ownership


"...the effectiveness of services, no matter what they are, may hinge less on the particular type of service than on how, when, and why families or caregivers are engaged in the delivery of care. While traditional forms of care approached mental health treatment in a hierarchical top down approach (with the clinician maintaining some distance from the recipients of treatment), this approach is not reflected in newer forms of service delivery. It is becoming increasingly clear that family engagement is a key component not only of participation in care, but also in the effective implementation of it."


— Burns, Hoagwood & Mrazek, 1999

Additional Principle:


- Access
- Voice
- Ownership
- Choice






“The effectiveness of behavioral interventions is highly dependent on parent (and teacher) cooperation, enthusiasm, motivation, and sustained effort.”

—Hoza, 2001




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A consistent finding in the research is that when given choices as part of an intervention, children show a decrease in inappropriate behavior and/or an increase in appropriate behavior.

— Kern et al., 2001




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Additional Principles

- To provide meaningful choice, there must be:
 - u Comprehensive array of services;
 - u Broad provider network;
 - u Flexible funds;
 - u Information about individual providers and accountability at level of the individual providers.




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Illustrations of Systems of Care that Apply Additional Principles

- Vermont's Success Beyond Six Project
 - u Use of funds as venture capital to explore ways in which more funds blended
 - u Schools as lead agencies
- Detroit's Southwest Association for Children's Mental Health
 - u Family involvement
 - u Quality assurance and quality improvement
- Utah's Frontiers Project
 - u Provision of services in remote areas of state
 - u Collaboration among local providers




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Illustrations of Systems of Care that Apply Additional Principles

- Indiana's First Steps Early Intervention System
 - u Blind payer or "pay and chase" system
 - u Providers as independent contractors
 - Expands capacity
 - Increases access
 - u www.eikids.com
 - Multi-purpose website



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