

Systems of Care – What Makes Them Work?

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What is a “System of Care?”

A system of care is a comprehensive range of services which are organized into a coordinated network to meet the multiple and changing needs of a group of children and their families



What is a “System of Care” based on?

- Theory of change that is agreed upon by key stakeholders and includes:
 - Set of principles and values
 - Clear definition of population to be served and analysis of needs of that population
 - Best available research and knowledge about effective supports, services, and systems
 - Participatory and inclusive decision-making process

Key Principles/Values of a System of Care

- Services are based on needs and strengths of child and family;
- Promotes collaboration between families and professionals;
- Involves provision of individualized supports and services;
- Promotes culturally responsive supports and services;
- Involves collaboration between multiple agencies and service sectors;
- Includes system of ongoing evaluation and accountability.

What system conditions led to development of systems of care?

- Inadequate range of services and supports;
- Failure to individualize services;
- Fragmentation of system when children and families had multi-system needs;
- Children with special needs are in many systems;
- Lack of clear values/principles for system;
- Lack of clarity about population of concern;
- Inadequate accountability;
- Lack of adequate responsiveness to cultural differences.

How have systems of care changed over time?

- From primary outpatient and inpatient/residential services to expanded continuum of services;
- From almost exclusively funding programs 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;

How have systems of care changed over time? (cont.)

- From a focus on children with serious emotional disturbances and their families to a focus on other populations of concern;
- From an emphasis on replication to an emphasis on community-developed and community-owned systems based on locally developed values, theories of change, and accountability systems.

Resilience and Promotion of Wellness in Systems of Care

- Promotion of attachments and connections;
- Promotion of age-appropriate competencies;
- Promotion of hope, optimism, and belief in control over one's future;
- Promotion of opportunities to assume responsibility and give to others

What makes for successful systems of care?

1. Clear definition of the population to be served;
2. Sound understanding of the needs of the population and of the services and supports that are likely to be helpful;
3. Sound understanding of the current flow of the population through the system, and the desired flow of the population through the system;

What makes for successful systems of care? (cont.)

4. Identification of who needs to be involved in system development and creation of participatory process of system development;
5. Use of experiences of service providers and recipients in developing system;
6. Clear statement of values/principles;
7. Clear theory of change, including statement of goals for children and family, and for entire system;

What makes for successful systems of care? (cont.)

8. Strong emphasis on what is needed at the system, administrative/management and practice levels and understanding of the relationship between the levels;
9. Translation of theory of change into practice – use of resources in a manner that is consistent with values and principles, and theories of change;
10. Identification of training/team-building needs of system and development of plan to address them;

What makes for successful systems of care? (cont.)

11. Development and implementation of procedures to tell you how well you are implementing your strategies, how well you are achieving your desired outcomes, and to guide you in making mid-course adjustments:
 - system of care performance reviews;
 - ongoing assessment of stakeholder perspectives;
 - analysis of flow through system;
 - analysis of outcomes.
12. Continual use of data to make improvements in system