


**Family Choice of Services and Providers:
The Right Thing To Do, and
An Effective Thing To Do**


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Family Choice of Services and Providers: What Is It?

Family choice is a process in which families, including youth, are provided with information about alternative services, supports, and providers, and are able to select the services and supports they wish to receive, and the providers with whom they wish to work.




Why Family Choice?

- In terms of values and principles, it is the right thing to do
- In terms of effectiveness of services and supports, it is the right thing to do
- In terms of bringing about system change, it is the right thing to do




President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health (2003)

"Services and treatments must be consumer and family centered, geared to give consumers real and meaningful choices about treatment options and providers—not oriented to the requirements of bureaucracies." (p. 5)



Workgroup on Family-Driven Care of the Council on Collaboration and Coordination

Families and youth "must be given accurate, understandable, and complete information necessary to make choices for improved planning for individual children and their families." (March, 2005)



Crossing the Quality Chasm

"Patients should be given the necessary information and the opportunity to exercise the degree of control they choose over health care decisions that affect them."

—Institute of Medicine, 2001, p. 8

Campaign for Mental Health Reform

"For children with serious emotional disorders, having their parents make treatment decisions is especially important because no one understands the consequences of their illness as well as their parents, and no one is as personally invested in their successful recovery."
(2005, p. 21)



President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health (2003)

"Consumers and families told the Commission that having hope and the opportunity to regain control of their lives was vital to their recovery. Indeed, emerging research has validated that hope and self-determination are important factors contributing to recovery." (p. 27)



Meaningful Family Choice

- Requires that a broad range of services and supports be available
- That there be a variety of providers from whom to choose
- That there be information available about the effectiveness of the various services, supports, and providers, about risks and/or side-effects of them, and about the requirements of them
- Is part of an overall effort to support families and youth in their efforts to build on their own strengths and manage their own needs



What Family Choice Does Not Mean!

- Access to unlimited resources
- Abdication of a meaningful role by professionals and others on a treatment team



Implications of Family Choice as a Mechanism for System Change

- Financing/contracting procedures
- Accountability at the level of individual providers
- Role of family members
- Treatment planning process
- Development of diverse provider network
- Development of wide range of services
- Research and evaluation

It essentially brings about a change in power within a system.



Status of Family Choice of Services and Providers

- Strongly supported in concept and principle by family organizations and many providers and policy-makers
- Several strong models of implementation, e.g., Hawaii, Dawn Project, Wraparound Milwaukee
- Still, strong stereotypes to overcome about the ability of families to make their own decisions
- Overall, more rhetoric about it than action




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19th Annual Research Conference: A System of Care for Children's Mental Health:

Expanding the Research Base

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**Recommendations of
Subcommittee on Family Choice
Of Council on Collaboration and
Coordination (2005)**

- Need for greater visibility for the concept and practice of family choice
- Need for information on models of providing family choice
- Needs to be incorporated in system of care grant proposals
- Needs to be incorporated in evaluation of system of care sites
- Needs to be incorporated in research studies on direct services, e.g., preference-based models
- Needs to be promoted within other service sectors