

A System of Care for Children's Mental Health:  
Expanding the Research Base  
March 6 - 9, 2005, Tampa, Florida

# 18th Annual Proceedings



The Research and Training Center  
for Children's Mental Health

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### About the Center . . .

The Center is part of the Department of Child and Family Studies at the Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida. Since its inception in 1984, the Center has conducted an integrated series of research, training, consultation, and dissemination activities to achieve its mission of improving service delivery systems for children with serious emotional or behavioral disabilities and their families. The Annual Research Conference represents one of the events coordinated by the Center to encourage the development and sharing of information on effective service systems.

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# Preface

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We are pleased to present the Proceedings of the *18th Annual Research Conference: A System of Care for Children's Mental Health — Expanding the Research Base*, held March 6-9, 2005, in Tampa Florida. The Proceedings are designed to capture the discussions, papers, and posters presented at the Annual Research Conference, and to inform future research and practice on many aspects of the design, implementation, and evaluation of systems of care for children and their families. The Annual Research Conference presenters are selected for their commitment to high quality research, and the summaries of their presentations reflect their dedication to improving the lives of children and their families.

For almost 20 years now, the main policy response at all levels of government to addressing the needs of children with serious emotional disturbance and their families has been to support the development of integrated, community-based systems of care. There has been considerable progress in implementing these systems of care, and there is evidence to show that children and families have benefited from such systems. However, developing, implementing, and sustaining large system changes, which systems of care represent, is a complex and challenging task, and there is considerable research to suggest the need for improvement at all levels.

Recently, the President's New Freedom Commission called for a complete transformation of the U.S. mental health system. In that report, the President directed the Commission members "to study the problems and gaps in the mental health system and make concrete recommendations for immediate improvements that the Federal government, State governments, local agencies, as well as public and private health care providers, can implement." (New Freedom Commission, 2003, p. 2). In keeping with the Commission's report, our challenge today is to add a public health approach to children's mental health and their families and find ways to implement "what works" within the framework of systems of care. Given this challenge, the Center is increasingly interested in research that reflects the practicalities of implementation.

You'll find that the summaries in this volume reflect the vision and challenges of the New Freedom Commission, with some emergent themes. For example, this year several of our authors examine evidence-based practices and how to integrate them into emerging systems of care. Another key theme attends to moving family-driven systems beyond family inclusion to family voice and choice, where service development emerges from family preference and provider effectiveness. Another theme concerns data-driven decision making to promote the use of community-based care and the implementation of continual quality assurance. Other topics in this volume, also reflective of the Commission's goals, include: wraparound and issues regarding access to appropriate services, collaboration among child serving systems, support for youth transition to independence, financing strategies and organizational readiness for change, workforce development, emerging research and evaluation methods and instrumentation.

Each year, we find ourselves impressed by the quality of research presented at the conference and by the amount of effort required to produce such outstanding work. The summaries reflect an interdisciplinary approach to children's mental health research, and continue to capture trends that influence the work we do for children and their families. The Proceedings are designed to provide a "thumbnail" sketch of the conference presentations and we encourage you to contact the authors for more information about their work. With sincere appreciation for our authors, reviewers, and to our colleagues in the field, thank you for your insight, hard work, and dedication to the field of children's mental health research. We hope you will find the Proceedings of theoretical interest and practical use.

## **The editors:**

Catherine C. Newman, Cindy J. Liberton, Krista Kutash, and Robert M. Friedman

Reference: New Freedom Commission on Mental Health (2003). *Achieving the promise: Transforming mental health care in America*. Final report. Rockville, MD: U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services (Pub. No. SMA-03-3832). Retrieved 1/24/06: <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov/reports/Finalreport/FullReport.htm>

## A Special Thank You...

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Each year, as the Research Conference concludes, we look ahead to the Proceedings. The first step, of course, is to invite our presenters to share their work, and we are grateful that so many agree to do so. Thanks to all for their timely submissions, and patience with edits, suggestions and requests.

Upon receipt, each submission is matched with two expert reviewers from the University of South Florida's Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute faculty and staff. Their thoughtful comments and suggestions continue to contribute enormously to the quality of this volume.

This year's review team included: Ilene Berson, Karen Blase, Richard Briscoe, Hewitt "Rusty" Clark, Nicole Deschenes, Norin Dollard, Albert Duchnowski, Kathleen Ferreria, Dean Fixsen, Robert Friedman, Paul Greenbaum, Mario Hernandez, Sharon Hodges, Mary Ann Kershaw, Krista Kutash, Nancy Lynn, Carol MacKinnon-Lewis, Tom Massey, Teresa Nesman, Robert Paulson, Don Policella, Steve Roggenbaum, Stephanie Romney, Amy Vargo, Bobbie Vaughn, Frances Wallace, and Stevlana Yampolskaya. Much interdisciplinary expertise is represented by this list. Thank you.

The research conference is characterized by the collaboration of many disciplines; this is true for the production of this volume, as well. The Department of Child and Family Studies (CFS), which is home to the Research and Training Center, contributes support for production of the Proceedings. The department's CFS Communication staff members have worked on the Proceedings project for many years, and have created numerous strategies that make this publication possible. A special thank you goes to the leader of our desktop publishing team, Dawn Khalil, for her expert guidance in transforming hundreds of tables and figures into publication-ready digital images. We also want to thank Taylor Johnson and Jon Wilson for their tireless administrative support throughout the publication process.

And last, but not least, we are thankful for the continued leadership and support of our funders: the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Education, and the Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. These agencies' commitment to excellence and to improving services for the nation's children and their families is strong. Our goal is for these Proceedings and all products disseminated by the Center is to reflect their vision.

**The editors:** Catherine C. Newman, Cindy J. Liberton, Krista Kutash,  
and Robert M. Friedman

### On The Web...

*The Proceedings are available on the World Wide Web. Go to <http://rtckids.fmhi.usf.edu>, and you will find a route to this Proceedings in its entirety, as well as past issues.*

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