



A System of Care for Children's Mental Health:
Expanding the Research Base
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19th Annual Proceedings



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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

We are pleased to present the Proceedings of the *19th Annual Research Conference: A System of Care for Children's Mental Health — Expanding the Research Base*, held February 21-24, 2006, in Tampa Florida. The annual Proceedings provide an overview of the discussions, papers, and posters presented at the conference, and address many aspects of current design, implementation, and evaluation of systems of care for children and their families. Each year, the Annual Research Conference's presenters are selected for their commitment to high quality research; you'll find the summaries of their presentations reflect their dedication to improving the lives of children and their families.

The 19th Annual Research Conference was remarkable for its efforts to articulate national goals for the field, and the opening plenary session at our conference posed a central question: "By 2016, how can we, as a field, significantly increase access to effective services for the nation's children with mental health challenges and their families, in accordance with system of care values and principles?"

Those attending the session will recall the diverse group of national leaders on the dais during the *Gwen Iding Brogden Distinguished Lecture Series, Sixty Minutes on Children's Mental Health: Actions for the Future*. Our speakers made the case—from their perspectives—for what they believed were the most important actions we could take to shape the future of children's mental health services in the next decade¹. By the following morning, the Center's National Advisory Board and conference participants had weighed in, and the resulting synthesis charged the field to take the following actions: make children's mental health a national priority; champion new and improved financing models; improve the workforce; ensure services are family driven and youth guided; and, advance the science².

As we prepare these Proceedings for publication, we believe that they may help to "advance the science" and provide access to the work being done by colleagues nationwide to build the empirical base necessary to implement effective systems of care to serve children and their families. Each year, current trends are reflected in the contents of this volume, and many reflect the goals distilled at the 2006 conference. Emergence of a large chapter on implementing evidence-based programs and practices is no surprise; nor, given the 20 year history of this conference, is the discussion of issues surrounding support for youths facing the challenges of transition and independence. Many summaries also describe what we understand about implementing family-driven services, from a range of viewpoints, and this year, we find the voice of family advocates joined by the voice of youth.

The Center's research agenda is guided by a theoretical framework of implementation factors believed to contribute to development of effective systems of care, and the Proceedings naturally address the empirical basis for many of these factors, along with the tools continuously refined to examine them. Systems of care, however, are complex systems, with key components interrelated; we draw your attention to the summaries offered on lessons learned from multi-site systems studies, and particularly to the summary authored by the Center's Case Studies of Systems of Care Implementation team, which introduces an intriguing framework of leverage points for systems change.

We believe that even a cursory read will acquaint the reader with a wealth of key issues, and help plot the course for further investigation. The Proceedings' summaries at best provide a "thumbnail" sketch of the conference presentations and we encourage you to contact the authors for more information about their work, and look for their publications in other venues. 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

¹Videos, by speaker, from Sixty Minutes on Children's Mental Health: Actions for the Future are available at: <http://rtckids.fmhi.usf.edu/rtcconference/19thconference/plenary/>

²The synthesis PowerPoint prepared by Eric Bruns and Sybil Goldman is available at: <http://rtckids.fmhi.usf.edu/rtcconference/handouts/default.cfm?appid=19280>

A Special Thank You...

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: Mary I. Armstrong, Ilene Berson, Karen Blase, Richard Briscoe, Hewitt "Rusty" Clark, Nicole Deschênes, Norín 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 Jon Wilson for his assistance with graphics, and Malveeka Sharma for her administrative support.

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.fnhi.usf.edu>, and you will find a route to this Proceedings in its entirety, as well as past issues.

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