

Proceedings

Celebrating 20 years of research on Systems of Care

A System of Care for Children's Mental Health: Expanding the Research Base

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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

This is the 20th anniversary of the proceedings, from the 20th annual research conference, *A System of Care for Children's Mental Health: Expanding the Research Base*. Each year for the past two decades, we have invited presenters to submit summaries of their work for publication in these pages. Some writers—young and unpublished at first appearance in the proceedings—are now the leaders in our field. Sadly, a few who shared their work regularly are no longer with us, but evidence of their contribution lives on throughout these twenty volumes.

In twenty years, the research base on systems of care has certainly "expanded" and the contents of this year's volume reflect this. The summaries capture our usual mix, from intervention studies within a system of care context to large evaluations of multi-site initiatives. They provide information on emerging measures and methods, current status of our populations of concern, and much discussion on the wicked problem of increasing access to high quality services for all families. What we have learned over this twenty years is that effective system of care must continually consider context. Barriers to service delivery can be rural, urban, cultural, fiscal, political, and most often a combination of these.

Despite our Center's hypothesis that there are certain factors that must be present for systems of care to be effective, these summaries illustrate that no one system of care fits all. We suggest the answer is in the mix; understanding how implementation factors interact, from careful identification of populations of concern, to creation of a relevant provider network that reflects family voice and choice throughout. This is big picture work. The 20th annual conference featured an afternoon dedicated to understanding the current "state of the science" regarding such implementation issues. We are pleased to include a summary of the opening plenary for these sessions, where senior investigators from the Center—Friedman, Hodges, and Blase—identify models for understanding the big picture, and suggest how the field may frame future investigations.

Now enter evidence-based programs and practices. Several summaries describe small and large scale efforts to implement many kinds of evidence-based and promising practices with fidelity. These snapshots together start to reveal a picture of how the principles and values of systems of care apply to adoption of such practices, facilitate their implementation, and should produce good outcomes for the children and families they serve. Both success stories and reports of barriers inform future efforts, and represent further expansion of the research base for systems of care.

The purpose of the proceedings has been to provide snapshots of the work being done nation-wide to improve mental services for children and their families. In the past, we invited presenters to submit summaries following the conference, and for many reasons, the results, while weighty and important, have not been not all inclusive. This year, for the 21st conference, we take steps to ensure that the work of all of our presenters is immediately available to the field. During the application process to present, we now gather brief, formal summaries; all participants will receive this compendium upon arrival in Tampa. What the volume may lose in level of detail on individual projects is balanced by speed of production and access to the entire breadth and wealth of perspectives reflected in our agenda.

Regardless of your role in improving services to children and families, we hope that you will find the contents of this Proceedings, and the compendium to come, of assistance in your critical work.

The editors,

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

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, Krista Kutash, Nancy Lynn, Carol MacKinnon-Lewis, Tom Massey, Teresa Nesman, Robert Paulson, Don Policella, Steve Roggenbaum, Amy Vargo, Bobbie Vaughn, 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 putting the *Proceedings* on-line, and Maureen Chavez 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.fmhi.usf.edu, and you will find a route to this Proceedings in its entirety, as well as past issues.

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