

## INTRODUCTION

### The Health Care Reform Tracking Project (HCRTP)<sup>1</sup>

Since 1995, the Health Care Reform Tracking Project (HCRTP) has been tracking publicly financed managed care initiatives and their impact on children with mental health and substance abuse (i.e. behavioral health) disorders and their families. The HCRTP's *Promising Approaches Series* highlights strategies, approaches and features within publicly financed managed care systems that hold promise for effective service delivery for children and adolescents with behavioral health treatment needs and their families, particularly for children with serious and complex disorders. The *Series* draws on the findings of the HCRTP to date, highlighting relevant issues and approaches to addressing them, that have surfaced through the HCRTP's all-state surveys and in-depth impact analyses in a smaller sample of 18 states.<sup>2</sup>

The *Promising Approaches Series* is comprised of a number of thematic issue papers, each addressing a specific aspect of managed care systems affecting children with behavioral health disorders. The papers are intended as technical assistance resources for states and communities as they refine their managed care systems to better serve children and families. The following topics are being addressed in the *Promising Approaches Series*:

- managed care design and financing
- services for children with serious and complex behavioral health care needs
- accountability and quality assurance in managed care systems
- the child welfare system perspective
- making interagency initiatives work for children and families in the child welfare system
- clinical decision making mechanisms
- care management
- family involvement.

### Methodology of the HCRTP

Many of the strategies and approaches that are described in the *Promising Approaches Series* were identified by key state and local informants who

responded to the HCRTP's all-state surveys and who were interviewed during site visits to 18 states for the HCRTP's impact analyses. Some approaches were identified through other studies and by experts in the field. Once promising approaches and features were identified through these methods, members of the HCRTP team, including researchers, family members and practitioners, engaged in a number of additional methods to gather more information about identified strategies. Site visits were conducted in some cases during which targeted interviews were held with key stakeholders, such as system purchasers and managers, managed care organization representatives, providers, family members and other child-serving agency representatives. In other cases, telephone interviews were held with key state and local officials and family members to learn more about promising strategies. Supporting documentation was gathered and reviewed to supplement the data gathered through site visits and phone interviews.

The *Promising Approaches Series* intentionally avoids using the term, "model approaches". The strategies, approaches and features of managed care systems described in the *Series* are perceived by a diverse cross-section of key stakeholders to support effective service delivery for children with behavioral health disorders and their families; however, the HCRTP has not formally evaluated these approaches. In addition, none of these approaches or strategies is without problems and challenges, and each would require adaptation in new settings to take into account individual state and local circumstances. Also, a given state or locality

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<sup>2</sup> The HCRTP is being conducted jointly by the Research and Training Center for Children's Mental Health at the University of South Florida, the Human Service Collaborative of Washington, D.C. and the National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health at the Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development. For information about available HCRTP reports, see Appendix A.

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described in the *Promising Approaches Series* may be implementing an effective strategy or approach in one part of its managed care system and yet be struggling with other aspects of the system.

The *Series* does not describe the universe of promising approaches that are underway in states and localities related to publicly financed managed care systems affecting children with behavioral health disorders and their families. Rather, it provides a snapshot of promising approaches that have been identified through the HCRTTP to date. New, innovative approaches are continually surfacing as the public sector continues to experiment with managed care. While each approach or strategy that is described in the *Promising Approaches Series* is instructive in its own right, there also are important commonalities across these strategies and approaches. Each paper of the *Promising Approaches Series* focuses on a different aspect of publicly financed managed care systems.

### The Child Welfare Papers

Since 1996, the HCRTTP has included a special focus on the effects of managed care on children and families involved in the child welfare system. This paper, *A View from the Child Welfare System*, is intended to assist states and communities interested in strategies for meeting the behavioral health needs of children in the child welfare system, and their families, within **managed care systems**. A companion paper in the *Series* focuses on how the child welfare system is participating in collaborative **interagency initiatives** designed to serve children with serious and complex behavioral health disorders. Entitled *Making Interagency Ini-*

#### Children and Families Involved in the Child Welfare System

This includes children living in their own homes and receiving services from the child welfare system, as well as children in the foster care system. The “foster care system” refers to children who are in the custody of a county or state child welfare agency or a tribal court and who may live in a foster home, group home, kinship care home, residential treatment center, or other out-of-home placement. It includes children who will return home, as well as those for whom another permanent plan will be made such as guardianship or adoption. For the purposes of this study, families needing post-adoption services also are included.

*tiatives Work for Children and Families in the Child Welfare System*, this companion paper describes approaches for including the child welfare system in planning and implementing interagency initiatives, for addressing child welfare system policies, for sharing resources across systems, and for meeting the behavioral health needs of children and families.

### How This Paper Is Organized

This paper presents information to consider when designing public managed care to meet the behavioral health needs of children and families involved with the child welfare system. It also presents examples of promising approaches from four states and communities.

#### A View from the Child Welfare System

**Introduction:** Describes the Health Care Reform Tracking Project and its methodology.

**Section I:** Presents a framework for developing a comprehensive approach to serving children with behavioral health needs and their families in publicly funded managed care systems. The framework includes 15 critical components to consider. The section discusses challenges and considerations **unique to the child welfare system** related to implementing each of the components. A checklist of questions for states and communities to consider follows the discussion of each component.

**Section II:** Describes examples of promising approaches from four states or communities for making publicly funded managed care work for children and families involved with the child welfare system who need behavioral health services.

**Section III:** Offers concluding observations and summarizes challenges faced by the four states or communities described in Section II, as well as similar key strategies noted across these four sites.