

# Promising Approaches

for Behavioral Health Services to Children and Adolescents  
and Their Families in Managed Care Systems

## 4: Accountability and Quality Assurance in Managed Care Systems

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### Introduction

#### Health Care Reform Tracking Project

Since 1995, the **Health Care Reform Tracking Project (HCRTTP)** 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 HCRTTP is co-funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research in the U.S. Department of Education and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Supplemental funding has been provided by the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the Center for Health Care Strategies, Inc. to incorporate a special analysis related to children involved in the child welfare system. The HCRTTP 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 Georgetown University.

The **HCRTTP Promising Approaches Series** is comprised of a number of thematic issue papers that describe promising strategies, approaches, and features of service delivery to children and adolescents with behavioral health disorders and their families (particularly for children with serious and complex disorders) in publicly-financed managed care systems. The series draws on the findings of the HCRTTP to date, highlighting relevant issues and approaches that have surfaced through the HCRTTP's all-state surveys and in-depth impact analyses in a smaller sample of 18 states. The papers are intended to be technical assistance resources for states and communities as they refine their managed care systems to better serve children and families.

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## Methodology for Study of Promising Approaches

The strategies and approaches described in the **Promising Approaches Series** were identified by key state and local informants via the state surveys and site visit interviews conducted as part of the HCRTP. More detailed information was then gathered about these promising approaches and features by members of the HCRTP team, including researchers, family members, and practitioners. In some cases, sites were visited so that targeted interviews could be conducted 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 conducted with key state and local officials and family members, and supporting documentation was gathered and reviewed.

The series intentionally avoids using the term, “model approaches.” Although 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, 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 to individual state and local circumstances. Also, a given state or locality described in the 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. Rather, it provides a snapshot of promising approaches that have been identified through the HCRTP to date. New, innovative approaches are continually surfacing as the public sector continues to experiment with managed care.

Each approach or strategy that is described in the series is instructive in its own right. At the same time, the commonalities that exist across these strategies and approaches help illustrate how effective service delivery systems are organized within a managed care environment for this population.

Each paper in the series focuses on a specific aspect of publicly-financed managed care systems. This paper is on **Promising Approaches to Managed Care Accountability and Quality Assurance**.

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# Overview

## Promising Approaches 4: Accountability and Quality Assurance in Managed Care Systems

This paper identifies a number of managed care accountability and quality assurance approaches that support effective service-delivery to children with serious emotional problems and their families. These promising approaches include both statewide approaches focused on a total population (Delaware, Pennsylvania, Iowa, and Utah) and local sites (HealthChoices in Allegheny County, PA; Dawn Project in Marion County, IN; and Delaware County, PA) focused on a specific geographic area (see **Table 1**).

<b>Statewide Approaches</b>	<b>Local Approaches</b>
Delaware	Allegheny County, PA
Iowa	Delaware County, PA
Pennsylvania	Marion County, Indiana
Utah	

The paper addresses four areas of accountability: (1) availability of data for decision making, (2) types of system performance information collected and tracked, (3) measurement of clinical and functional outcomes, and (4) quality measurement. The discussion of each area begins with a brief review of the accountability and quality assurance issues related to public sector behavioral health managed care that have been identified through the Health Care Reform Tracking Project.

The discussion of accountability and quality assurance issues highlights differences between **carve out** and **integrated designs**, design differences which the HCRTF has been analyzing since its inception. Following the review of each accountability issue, the paper describes related promising approaches. The final section for each issue summarizes the common characteristics and challenges described by key stakeholders as well as recommendations to other states and communities. The paper concludes with a list of resource contacts for the promising approaches, and a list of national organizations addressing these issues.