

## Systems of Care and Evidence-based Practice: Creating Bridges

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## Improving Quality and Effectiveness of Care

Major approach since the mid 1980s has been through the development and implementation of community-based systems of care based on a set of principles and values, and the best available research.




## What is a "System of Care?"

A system of care is a comprehensive spectrum of mental health and other necessary services which are organized into a coordinated network to meet the multiple and changing needs of children and adolescents with severe emotional disturbances and their families.




## What System Conditions Led to Development of Systems of Care?

- Inadequate range of services and supports
- Failure to individualize services
- Fragmentation of system when children and families had multi-system needs
- Children with special needs are in many systems
- Lack of clear values/principles for system
- Lack of clarity about population of concern
- Inadequate accountability
- Lack of adequate responsiveness to cultural differences



## Role of System of Care

To provide access to effective services for a large and diverse population within a specified community.




## Key Principles/Values of a System of Care

- Based on needs of child and family
- Promotes partnerships between families and professionals
- Involves collaboration between multiple agencies and service sectors
- Involves provision of individualized supports and services based on strengths and needs in multiple domains
- Promotes culturally responsive supports and services
- Includes system of ongoing evaluation and accountability


## Major Changes

- Individualized care
- Family voice and choice
- Cultural competence
- Collaboration across sectors
- Strength and need-based
- Data-based
- Systemic



## Overall Challenge

- Integrate and not just build bridges;
- Bring together values and principles, needs of the population of concern, system structures and functions, individualized care, family choice, performance measurement, and evidence-based treatments;
- Create a system that is able to adapt to changed needs and conditions, and engages in periodic data-based review and reflection for purpose of continuous improvement.




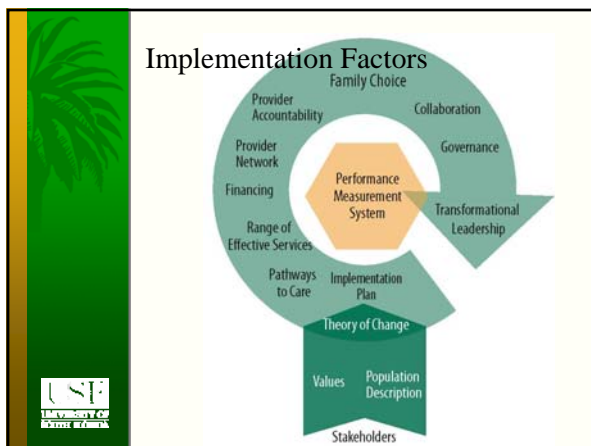
## The Population of Concern: *Children with Serious Mental Health Challenges and Their Families*

- Diverse group in every imaginable way – needs, strengths, problems, co-occurring conditions, race, gender, and ethnicity, family structure and functioning, family strengths and needs, community context;
- Needs are complex and problems interfere with functioning in important settings, e.g., home, school, community



## Our Model of Implementation

- Why is it needed?
- From whence does it come?
- How can it be used?





## Common Processes and Functions

*Based on research and experience in:*



- Child Mental Health
- Developmental Disabilities
- Adult Mental Health
- Substance Abuse
- Public Health
- Child Welfare
- Community Development
- Prevention







### Differentiating Data-Based from Evidence Based

- *Data-based* focuses on actual, present performance and is designed for continuous quality improvement;
- *Evidence-based* focuses on implementation of interventions demonstrated to be successful elsewhere.





### Performance Measurement and Evidence Based Practice

- Data on system performance helps stakeholders to determine if they need to make changes.
- It should come before efforts to make change.
- If the need is identified, then stakeholders should examine alternative approaches to making change.





### Evidence-Based Practices *What They Are Not and What They Should Be*

- They should not be viewed as an alternative approach to systems of care and individualized care.
- *They should be a complement and enhancement to systems of care and individualized care.*





### Evidence-Based Practices *What They Are Not and What They Should Be*

- They should not be an alternative to child and family choice.
- *They should provide important information to children and families, and to entire treatment planning teams, so that informed choices can be made.*




### Evidence-Based Practices *What They Are Not and What They Should Be*

- They should not be the only choice, or always the best choice, for improving outcomes in a community system.
- *They are one alternative approach to improving outcomes that should be considered by community stakeholders along with other alternatives.*



### Evidence-Based Practices *What They Are Not and What They Should Be*


- They should not be an effort to establish one-size fits all interventions that can be applied to all populations under varying conditions.
- *They should be an attempt to look contextually at interventions, taking into consideration such factors as characteristics of the population to be served, the community, and the system.*



**Evidence-Based Practices**  
*What They Are Not and What They Should Be*

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- They should not be an attempt to stifle innovation and adaptation.
- *They should encourage innovation and adaptation, and the careful study of field-based interventions that have not had the resources or opportunity for careful evaluation.*



**Evidence-Based Practices**  
*What They Are Not and What They Should Be*

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- They should not be an effort to emphasize one approach to research to the exclusion of others.
- *They should be an effort to encourage a culture within a system of care that focuses on a variety of data-based approaches.*



**Evidence-Based Practices**  
*What They Are Not and What They Should Be*

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- They should not be an attempt to anoint particular interventions as "the answer" to particular needs.
- *They should recognize that knowledge is not static, and that interventions must be studied and understood in a context.*




"The President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health emphasizes both the importance of individualized plans of care, and the application of evidence-based practice. This is very significant because long-term meaningful improvements in outcomes for children with serious mental health challenges and their families will depend on a coming together of these two important approaches."

— Friedman and Drews



"There were relatively few instances identified where there had been a systematic effort to integrate evidence-based practices with individualized care. In most cases, the policy emphasis in a local community was either on promoting the development of systems of care and individualized care, or on promoting the use of evidence-based practices. The good news is, however, that there were some very positive examples of such an integrated approach."

— Friedman and Drews, 2005




**Evidence-Based Practices and Systems of Care**

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- Multiple stages of integration in Central Nebraska;
- Role of treatment team.






## Broad-Scale Integration

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- Hawaii's System of Care



## Other Examples

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- Wraparound Milwaukee
- Dawn Project
- Westchester County



## Evidence-Based Practices

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- A work in progress;
- An important part of improving outcomes for children with serious mental health challenges and their families, particularly when integrated with other important system features.



## Your Challenge

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- Build a strong foundation for your system of care through effective partnerships, clear values and principles, a strong theory of change, sound performance measurement, and regular review of progress for purposes of improvement;
- Identify areas of strength and areas in need of strengthening;



## Your Challenge


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- Examine alternative strategies for improvements, where needed, including the expanded use of evidence-based treatments;
- Continue the iterative process of system development in which data are collected and used to assess the impact of changes, and the overall progress toward the achievement of system goals.



“We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them.”

— Einstein



Robert Friedman  
*Developing Local Systems of Care*  
Dearborn, MI  
May 23, 2006



With innovation, partnerships, clarity of purpose and values, data-based decision-making, and enhanced interventions, significant progress can be made!!!