



## THE FEDERATION OF FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

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### Report on Targeted Technical Assistance

#### OKLAHOMA - II

#### THE REQUEST

The Oklahoma Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services requested assistance from the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health (FFCMH) with implementing a state wide Children's Behavioral Health Summit on October 9-10, 2003. The request included FFCMH staff participation in the implementation of Oklahoma's first statewide children's summit *Weaving a Tapestry of Hope* by:

- Providing orientation for ALL family participants prior to the Summit;
- Providing training, mentoring, and coaching for families to effectively and meaningfully participate in multi-stakeholder work groups; and
- Assisting families in the preparation of their materials for panel presentation to multiple stakeholder audience.

#### THE PARTICIPANTS

Over 240 participants reflected diverse cultures, responsibilities, and background. They included representatives of the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services, Oklahoma Department of Human Services, OK Office of Juvenile Affairs, Commission on Children & Youth, Health Care Authority, Parents as Partners (Oklahoma's statewide organization of the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health), State Department of Health, OK Child Study Center and the OK State Department of Education, a consultant from the University of South Florida, staff and consultants for the Technical Assistance Partnership supporting Oklahoma's federally funded systems of care. Other attendees included youth, juvenile court judges, legislators, community programs, NAMI OK, several FFCMH local chapters and 30 families of youth with mental health issues.

#### THE PROCESS

Technical assistance provided by the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health included:

### *Facilitation of a universal message*

Families, experiencing varying degrees of pain and distress (including blame, anger, shame, mistrust and lack of confidence), valiantly faced these challenges to create a unified message for other system stakeholders. FFCMH staff engaged families in discussion of what they want in their system of care for Oklahoma children, youth and families. Preliminary discussion among families led them to explore such things as demonstration of their underlying values and principles and the values and principles of systems of care; accountability; timely access to services; consistency; shared responsibility; the importance of data; and putting children and families first. They defined success - "Success comes when everyone and every system share responsibility and works together with the family's natural support system to address needs, no one gets blamed, everyone wraps services and supports around the child and family and creates a safety net".

### *Teambuilding*

Many families had not met one another prior to this event and they represented a number of family groups, each with its own particular focus, voice, and membership characteristics. The diversity of this group was due to the efforts of the Summit planning group. They had established having representatives from multiple family and family advocacy groups from throughout the state as a primary strategy of this event. Very early in the process families expressed a need to have a common definition of FAMILY. The group reached consensus and adopted the FFCMH definition.

FFCMH staff continued to work more intensely with a few families to design and develop a panel presentation for conference participants. It is notable that families developed the overarching theme and core messages of their panel presentation as a group - a sign that they were beginning to overcome their differences and work in collaboration

### *Coaching, modeling and mentoring*

FFCMH staff assisted families in their challenge to reframe their long-standing personal experiences to concisely describe and illustrate systems' issues. Discussions of *what they didn't have* were refocused on what they believed would work for their children and families. **Families identified what they do want from their system of care and what they expect it to do for them.** The combined experiences and universal message of

Oklahoma families laid the foundation for their PowerPoint presentation. FFCMH staff asked questions for clarification while writing the actual words of families to create their statements. Families reacted to their own and their peers written words with enthusiasm or refining edits - evoking both individual and team ownership of the final product.

Family members each selected the parts of the message they wished to address. Then, using a process of negotiations with their peers, made sure everyone had a role they were comfortable with. Of the six family members who presented, two presented bits of their own story to illustrate points they made in the presentation; two (who held professional positions) mostly covered system issues from a family perspective and one of these illustrated her remarks with examples from her children's experience (even though they were not in systems of care); one family member read the river poem as illustrative of the 'family experience' in general; and one family member (who had a lot of other assignments at the meeting and so could not participate much with the group) simply read out one of the slides that meant a great deal to her.

#### *Technical & logistical support*

FFCMH staff:

- ✓ Ensured a safe environment for sharing and candid discussion of family experiences;
- ✓ Coached family members to develop their own portion of the presentation by:
  - Drawing out their personal experiences;
  - Listening carefully and recording on computer the ideas and experiences of families on computer;
  - Creating a PowerPoint framework for their panel presentation and putting their own content into it;
  - Creating images and graphics - at their direction - to support the PowerPoint presentation; and
  - Explored options with families for setting up the stage for their panel presentation. Panelists worked directly with the facility crew to arrange the tables and chairs, microphones, and props they had brought so they felt comfortable and could convey their message with maximum impact on the audience.

- ✓ Met with panel moderator Palma Bucher, NAMI OK and panel presenters on Thursday evening for review of product and the sequence in which they would speak. Palma introduced the panel, FFCMH staff and the definition of "family" the group had previously adopted.
- ✓ Provided each panel member with a copy of their material and the full presentation; and
- ✓ Operated the slide show during panel presentation.

## THE OUTCOMES

Families raised the bar with respect to what a "parent panel" can do. They overcame enormous environmental, logistical, and social obstacles to produce this slide show and presented it with grace, dignity, honesty, and humility. Their creativity did not end with developing the slide show - they also set the stage! A visit to the theater provided family members an opportunity to define the location and décor for their presentation. They chose to set tables on the floor below the stage and decorate their space with toys to resemble their homes. At the end, one of them insisted that this group was her new support team. The panel presentation better prepared all participants for meaningfully including a diverse complement of families in partnership with providers and state and local agencies for implementing systems of care in Oklahoma.

## EVALUATION

Conference evaluation had not been compiled by the time this report was written and submitted. However, Shannon CrossBear, Peer Mentor for the Oklahoma Systems of Care, and Jackie Shipp, State Children's Mental Health Services Coordinator both provided comments via E-mail. These are copied below.

### *From Shannon CrossBear*

"The feed back I had from family members was that the assistance that Pat and Trina provided was valuable and did help begin the process of healing the past divisions of family members. The response for the participants at the summit to the family presentation was positive, a highlight of the summit. I thought one clinician significantly shifted when he said during the

commitment and summation process that previously he had worked to provide more residential centers but now was committed to keeping children at home and in their community with their families and he would not be putting his efforts toward residential treatment facilities in the future... that says it all!"

*From Jackie Shipp*

"We in Oklahoma cannot thank you enough for the expertise, guidance, heart, and pure work you put into our children's behavioral health summit. Thanks to you, the participants were renewed, inspired, and equipped to take the next important steps toward a comprehensive system of care for our children and their families."