



THE FEDERATION OF FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

TTA Report - South Carolina - February 12-13, 2004

THE REQUEST:

The state of South Carolina is in the process of reforming its service delivery system for children's mental health. Moving toward a statewide "system of care" for children, youth and their families requires diligent attention to reviewing what the current system offers and what the new system needs to offer in capacity and design. To achieve the goal of designing a statewide system of care, the state is working with the Federation of Families of South Carolina to implement 17 public forums for service providers, families, youth and other stakeholders from their 4 regions. The forums will afford an opportunity for participants to learn more about system of care possibilities and elicit input from them regarding system reorganization. Forums will commence with an interactive presentation (live broadcast with call-ins) so all participants have a better understanding of system transformation, the SC vision, and New Freedom Commission recommendations. The remainder of forum time will be allotted to gather feedback from participants.

Pat Hunt provided on-site assistance to help stakeholders develop a questionnaire for family feedback to inform this system change process.

THE PARTICIPANTS:

The 22 participants represented state and local child-serving agencies (mental health, education, juvenile justice, higher ed), 3 families of children and 1 adult consumer.

THE PROCESS:

Participants from the state and its 4 regions discussed the plan for implementing 17 forums. Participants came to the event with varying degrees of information about the SC plan to move toward a system of care; the purpose of the statewide forums; and their role in the forum process. They also came with a dedication to expanding family voice; to gathering important feedback from families in a safe environment; and to making recommendations. Many of their recommendations revealed the significance of establishing an environment of trust for forum contributors and shared ownership for ensuring that families will be full participants.

The State Director of Mental Health provided information to stakeholders about the vision for moving forward with transforming Children and Adolescent services

into a national model predicated on "system of care" thinking and a strong emphasis on evidence based practices. He explained the role that the Community Forums play in implementing the vision of reducing residential care, increasing the number of children and families that are served in their homes, reducing the use of Juvenile Justice facilities, and increasing the success of children in school.

Spirited discussion among participants led to several suggestions regarding the forums. Recommendations had to do with issues ranging from strategies for getting the word out through how the information, once gathered, will be disseminated and used.

- TTA participants recommended the forum scheduled for March 26, 2004 be solely for family feedback and that other opportunities be explored for gathering information from other system partners. Issues leading to this recommendation include concern about the possibility of reduced attendance on Friday evening, and the need to ensure a safe and supportive atmosphere for families. They suggested 2 follow-up forums:
 - One with sister agencies during the "sacred hours" of a workday, and
 - One for private therapists and residential treatment centers
- In order to include as many voices as possible, have appropriate space available, and adequate food, participants suggested:
 - Involving youth
 - Talking with those missing from the table
 - SAVE THIS DATE notices be sent to families, Commission members, Legislators, and centers. Information should be uniform across the state & sent out locally.
 - FFCMH SC will e-mail a flyer to all centers
 - Putting a large ad in the newspaper
 - A personalized letter of invitation to attend the forums to listen should be sent to the Governor, legislators and Commission members.
 - Institute an RSVP process for forum participants (800# needed)
- It is crucial for the State Director to:
 - preface the forum discussion with a description of intent of the forum, where the information will go, and how it will be used
 - address the concern that families often ask for out-of-home placements when "alternatives are offered"
- FFCMH SC must:
 - be clear that this is a forum for FAMILY feedback
 - send the questions to the national presenter ahead of time

- Forum discussions will be co-facilitated by a mental health center staff person and a family member. The Federation of Families of South Carolina will identify families in each of the areas who are prepared for this task.
- The videoconference portion should be videotaped for sharing with policy makers and others.
- More than 1 hour is needed to gather family feedback.
- Centers will need to:
 - Have clinicians remind families
 - Remember to contact biological families who are experiencing reunification issues

THE OUTCOMES: THE QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGNED BY PARTICIPANTS

The state of South Carolina is in the process of reforming its mental health service delivery system to a system of care. Systems of Care insure every child gets essential, culturally appropriate, and effective community-based services and supports that allow them to **FUNCTION SUCCESSFULLY IN THEIR FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY**. In order to make these changes, it is important to be sure that all out of home placement is appropriate, thereby reducing the human and financial costs of inappropriate, unnecessary or ineffective services and supports. Expanding family voice is central to this reform.

The Federation of Families of South Carolina is pleased to be gathering information to help be sure that system changes reflect the experiences of youth and their families who need and use services and supports. Thank you for sharing your experiences with us by completing the following:

1. What services and supports are working well in the community to support children and youth to function successfully in their family, school and community?
2. What services and supports are available in the community, but could work better to help you be able to keep your child at home and successfully involved with their family, school and community? (Please explain HOW they could work better)

3. Are there any problems with the way in which the people who serve you work together? YES NO

Please describe the problems:

4. If you were given a limited amount of money to spend on services and supports, what would you buy that would help your child be successful at home, in school and the community?

5. Do service providers ask what children & youth need at home, in school and the community? YES NO
6. Do your care planning meetings include representatives from all of the agencies with which your child or adolescent is involved? YES NO
7. Do your care planning decisions include youth and families as equal members?
(Are youth & families listened to?) YES NO
8. What things do youth need in order to live and function in the community as they transition to adulthood?
9. Many services currently focus on youth. What does your family as a whole need?
10. If you could have 3 things you need in order to help you be able to keep your child at home, and successful in their family, school and community, what would those be?
11. What services need to be expanded in order to:
- a. Help youth remain at home
 - b. Help youth be successful in school
 - c. Help youth and their families in the community
12. Describe the qualities you think make a system professional or service provider effective?