

Texas Children's Mental Health Forum

DISCUSSION NOTES

Tuesday, June 15, 2010

TOPIC:

A Policy Agenda to Advance Children's Mental Health in Texas

Notes are provided to share highlights of Forum meetings with those who are interested in the topics being discussed but are unable to attend. Texans Care for Children and the Texas Health Institute strive to capture an accurate outline of the information and discussion shared during each meeting. However, these notes should not be viewed as an official or complete record of the meeting, and some inaccuracies may be contained. Please contact [Josette Saxton](#) at Texans Care for Children to report any significant errors

PRESENTATION – Policy Recommendations Developed through the Texas Children's Mental Health Forum

Presented by Josette Saxton, Texans Care for Children

Josette Saxton provided an overview the priority recommendations and policy strategies and how these were developed. These recommendations have been emerging throughout the past year and fall into four general groupings:

- Prevention and early intervention
 - Maximize federal opportunities to expand home visitation programs
 - Support developmental screenings in primary care settings
- School-based behavioral health
 - Limiting counselors time spent on non-counseling duties
 - School staff training on recognizing potential behavioral health issues and how to make appropriate referrals
 - Require school-wide implementation of Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS)
 - Improving oversight of educational disciplinary programs
- Workforce
 - Training and consultation for front line workers (e.g., childcare, education, juvenile justice, child welfare) on research-informed practices & including trauma informed care
 - Establish a public-private infrastructure that links higher education and state child-serving agencies to disseminate information on evidence-based practices, promote multidisciplinary training and technical assistance, and assist in the evaluation of promising programs and services related to children's mental and behavioral health.
- Access to specialized mental health workforce and services
 - Providing privately insured children with coverage for serious emotional disturbances that interfere with their ability to function successfully at home, school and in the community.
 - Maintaining reimbursement rates to Medicaid/CHIP providers
 - Supporting the use of family liaisons and partners to assist families in navigating the various systems

While these recommendations and strategies do not mean the Forum will not support other issues, these are the ones the Forum will focus on during the legislative session.

PRESENTATION – Mental Health Prevention and Intervention in Child Care

Settings: A Social-Emotional Learning Collaborative ([link to presentation](#))

Presented by Mary Sondgeroth, United Way Capital Area; Melanie Walter-Mahoney, Austin Child Guidance; Pamela Schott, YWCA; and Cindy Rojas-Rodriguez, Raising Austin

Members of the United Way Success by Six Social Emotional Learning Collaborative provided information about the successful three agency collaborative to increase the percentage of children in Kindergarten in Central Texas who are “school ready.”

The three components of the collaborative include:

- Family Support – home visiting
- High Quality Child Care
- Social Emotional Learning

Austin Child Guidance provides the following services:

- Classroom observation
- Child assessments
- Individual, family and group interventions with staff, parents and children
- Staff and parent workshops
- Consultation and referral

YWCA of Greater Austin provides the following services:

- Teacher Support Groups with licensed mental health professional during children’s nap time.
- Individual counseling for child care staff and parents

Consultants meet with center directors once a month to discuss child development concepts, teacher-child relationships, stress management, and self-care. These sessions have resulted in changing the mindset of child care staff as to why the children are acting out.

Raising Austin provides research-based training of preschool teachers (targeting high-risk centers) focused on:

- Practical classroom management strategies
- Promotion of pro-social behavior
- Reduction of classroom aggression
- Increase in cooperation with peers and teachers

Raising Texas has achieved huge success with a 28-hr. series based interactive curriculum where center directors sit with staff and work through the curriculum. A stipend of \$100 is given to child care workers on completion of training. Trainings are held on Saturdays with meals. This type of setting is all about relationships with child care consultants. The curriculum may be obtained for \$125 from the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. Further information about this curriculum may be accessed at: www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel

Discussion

- High turnover among child care staff is a huge challenge.
- There is a need for continuity of effort from early childhood settings to public schools.

The key to this very rich initiative has been the collaboration between the three agencies and the building of the partnerships, trust, and relationships. While there will probably not be any state dollars to expand this model to other communities, there may be some federal grant opportunities, and working with United Ways and other community funders.

PRESENTATION – Establishing a Social and Emotional Wellness Center for Children and Families ([link to presentation](#))

Presented by Molly Lopez, UT Center for Social Work Research, member of Texas Mental Health Transformation Project's Child and Adolescent Action Team

Features of this Center:

- Would provide a “home” to continue mental health transformation efforts after the grant
- Would facilitate sharing of information, training resources, and infrastructure across child-serving agencies and providers
- Would support innovation/growth in the behavioral health system

In the preparation of this proposal, team members:

- Conducted research on existing centers and interviewed centers on how they got started, how funded, what services and supports provided.
- Put together a “white paper” on lessons learned from centers and what we would want a center in Texas to look like.

Initial Thoughts About the Center:

Structure:

- Affiliated with a Texas University – housed at one university or a collaborative of universities
- Integrating expertise from various disciplines, departments, and service sectors (e.g., psychiatry, social work, juvenile justice)
- Advisory Board

Purpose: Have a recognized hub of state-of-the-art knowledge that focuses on the social and emotional wellness of Texas children and families

Potential Services:

- Workforce Development
 - Technical training – both pre and post graduate
- Research and Development
 - Development, implementation, and evaluation of behavioral health programs
 - Evaluation
- Training and Technical Assistance

Financial Support

- Supported through combination of core funding supporting basic infrastructure and “soft” funding
- Potential Sources for Core Funding
 - Dues from user groups (i.e., state agencies, association, board member groups)
 - Foundation grants
 - Legislative appropriations
 - Endowment

Group Discussion

Josette asked that everyone look over the recommendations and state if you have any thoughts or are interested in working on any of these particular issues, please email her. Plans are to conduct webinars on these issues over the next few months prior to legislative session.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There are still opportunities for enrollment in the early HeadStart grant – need to let providers know about this opportunity for families who could benefit from home visitation program. Visit this website for more information:

http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/What's%20New/2010_whatsnew.html#Grantees