



Early Childhood System of Care

Continuing Study Outline

Stacey Cornett, LCSW, IMH E (IV)

Edited by Angela Tomlin, Ph.D., HSPP, IMH-E (IV) and
Stephan Viehweg, ACSW, LCSW

Goal

This continuing study outline provides an overview of systems of care principles and the special considerations for serving young children from this perspective.

Preparation

In preparation for this continuing study activity please review the following resources:

Early Childhood Mental Health in a Systems of Care, Available at:

http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/programs/ta_center/topics/early_childhood.html

Stroul, B. (2002). *Issue Brief-System of Care: A framework of system reform in children's mental health*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Child Development Center, National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health. Available at:

http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/files/products_publications/SOCbrief.pdf

Objectives

The participant will:

- A. Identify 3 factors beyond use of evidence based interventions that are important in Systems of Care.
- B. Name 3 challenges in evaluating the effectiveness of Systems of Care principles.
- C. Identify 4 underlying premises in a Systems of Care Framework.
- D. Define the uniqueness of an early childhood systems of care.
- E. Describe the types of services and supports present in an early childhood systems of care.

Overview

Over the past 15-20 years the concept of systems of care has been formulated, refined and evaluated. While there is promising evidence to validate that this framework and process supports our youth at greatest risk, there is less experience and evidence for use of this framework with our youngest children. Due to the fact that young children are developing at such a rapid pace and the impact to their development is often so great when mental health issues arise, it makes sense to

	<p>coordinate the systems that serve these families. This coordination is especially important at this point in time, the family's first experience with requesting and obtaining services for their children, because the benefits of a good experience have long-lasting impact. There is great value in coordination; when coordination is lacking, young children may be harmed when interactions are contradictory or fragmented.</p>
<p>Expanded Objectives</p>	<p>A: In utilizing evidence supported practices it is important to always consider the systems, population and cultural nuances of those that are served. Many evidence based practices may need modifications to appreciate some of these factors. Additionally, in the use of evidence based practices we should not close off the possibilities of identifying creative and innovative practices that may be effective in some situations. Lastly, is the concept that common sense and experience have significant value in clinical practice especially in the absence of evidence to support a specific practice.</p> <p>B: One reason why evaluation may be challenging is that more often than not a child is experiencing more than one type of intervention and service. The variables are many and it is difficult to isolate these variables. Next, various systems of care are usually implemented differently across communities. Although there may be adherence to the general principles, there may be vast differences in approach. Lastly, the interventions that are employed are constantly changing and evolving to meet the needs of the young child and family.</p> <p>C: One basic premise in the systems of care framework is the need to provide a broad array of services and supports. Although these supports should never be "canned" and should include the presence of natural supports, the availability of commonly needed traditional services should be present. Next, the importance of seeing young children within their natural environments is highly valued and considered essential. The family is strongly valued within this model and considered the most important resource to the child. It is critical to allow and support family members in making decisions about services and how they will be implemented. Another significant component is the strong emphasis on cultural influences. No services should be offered without serious consideration and input from the family regarding its fit with their cultural beliefs and practices.</p> <p>D: For children birth through five, the systems of care provides a cross-system, cross-agency infrastructure that sustains services and supports that: promote, positive mental health, prevent mental health problems in children and families, and intervene for children and families impacted by mental health disorders.</p> <p>E: Services that support the family and infant are necessary and of significant importance. It is also necessary to include services and supports to other caregivers</p>

	<p>and significant others in a young child's life. Both informal and formal supports have utility and should be included. This array of supports allows the family to have their needs met so that needed attention can be given to the infant or toddler.</p>
<p>Discussion Points</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage participants to list the many different people and systems that may touch the lives of a typical child and family and compare this to the people and systems that high need families may encounter. 2. Discuss barriers to coordination and strategies to encourage coordination across systems. 3. Invite participants to share experiences in which fragmented services were difficult and detrimental to families. 4. IAITMH welcomes your feedback about this and all of our training materials. Please send any comments to info@iaitmh.org.
<p>References and Recommended Readings</p>	<p>Perry, D., Kaufman, R., & Knitzer, R. (2007). <i>Social and emotional health in early childhood</i>. New York: Brookes.</p> <p>Rossmann, E. Perry, D. & Hepburn, K. S. (2005). The Best beginning: Partnerships Between Primary Health Care and Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services for Young Children and Their Families Retrieved May 12, 2009 from http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/files/products_publications/TACenter/bestbeginfinal.pdf.</p> <p>Simpson, J. S., Jivanjee, P., Koroloff, N., Doerfler, A., & Garcia, M. (2001). Promising practices in early childhood mental health. <i>Systems of Care: Promising practices in children's mental health, Volume III</i>. Retrieved May 12, 2009 from http://cecp.air.org/Portland_Monograph.pdf.</p>