



## *Louisiana Coordinated System of Care*

### **Announcement and Call for Input**

#### **Background**

Left untreated, mental health disorders in children and youth lead to higher rates of suicide, violence, school dropout, family dysfunction, juvenile incarcerations, alcohol and drug use, and unintentional injuries. Based on a recent sample review of Louisiana cases, it is estimated that 70% of all Medicaid-eligible youth in custody of OCS or OJJ placed in a residential facility have a mental health diagnosis requiring treatment. For children placed in foster homes, the range of those needing mental health treatment is 40% (OCS) to 70% (OJJ) and for children and parents served in their home, the range is 20% (OCS) to 50% (OJJ) of all clients served.

Currently, Louisiana provides for the needs of these children and families through a fragmented service delivery model that is not well coordinated and is often times difficult for families, law enforcement, judges and case workers to navigate.

#### **New System of Care Initiative by Governor Jindal, DSS, DHH, OJJ, DOE**

In November of 2009, representatives of the Governor's office, and the Secretaries of the Department of Social Services, the Department of Health and Hospitals, the Department of Education, and the Office of Juvenile Justice announced an important new cross-agency project that will, for the first time, create a true "system of care" for children with mental, emotional, and behavioral health needs in Louisiana. The system will serve children and youth that have significant behavioral health challenges who have had to be placed in out-of-home settings or are at imminent risk of out of home placement. These settings include: juvenile detention facilities, secure OJJ facilities, psychiatric hospitals, child residential facilities, development disabilities facilities, addiction facilities, alternative schools, homeless, and foster care.

In a "system of care," all of the agencies that serve children: child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health, Medicaid, education and other agencies, work collectively to ensure that children and their families have the services they need to succeed. The idea behind a system of care approach is that each child and family will have ONE plan for services, driven by their own needs and preferences. The plan should be based on the strengths of the child and family. Families should be involved in all aspects of service planning and delivery. An expanded array of services and supports will be developed, and these will be provided flexibly, in homes and communities, rather than in out-of-home care.

#### **It's Really Going to Happen!**

The project to create a "system of care" for Louisiana children and youth is on a fast track to implementation. The current work plan calls for a report briefing the upcoming legislature on the project by February 26, 2010, for the final design and financing strategies to be decided upon by August 31, 2010, and for Medicaid amendments and waiver requests to be submitted by

November 15, 2010. Stakeholders meetings will take place regularly, and a Planning Group is currently meeting.

A Leadership Team consisting of representatives of the Governor's office, the Secretaries of the Department of Social Services, the Department of Health and Hospitals, the Department of Education, and the Office of Juvenile Justice, a representative from the Louisiana Supreme Court, and representatives of family organizations, will lead this project.

**We want to involve families and youth in all future phases of this project, from initial planning to providing and monitoring services once the project is up and running.**

**How Your Organization Can Be Involved:**

1. Respond to this email by designating a point person to stay informed about System of Care activities and to disseminate information within your group.
2. Distribute the attached questionnaires to families and youth within the target group\* and help them respond. We hope to have initial responses compiled by March 15. We will continue to try to find effective ways for group members to participate.
3. Give us your suggestions about how to involve families with children and youth in the target group in all aspects of this project.
4. Select 2 families with children or youth in the target group\* to participate in small focus groups to be held in each of the following cities: New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Shreveport, and Monroe. Please respond to this announcement by March 15.

\* Target group: children and youth that have significant behavioral health challenges or co-occurring disorders that are in or at imminent risk of out of home placement. Out of home placements are defined as the following:

- Detention
- Secure Care facilities
- Psychiatric hospitals
- Residential treatment facilities
- Development disabilities facilities
- Addiction facilities
- Alternative schools
- Homeless as identified by DOE
- Foster care

**RESPOND TO:**

Karen Stubbs  
Executive Director of the Children's Cabinet  
Office of the Governor  
P. O. Box 94004  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804  
(225) 342-3327(225) 376-4924 (fax)  
Karen.Stubbs@LA.gov