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A Vision for an Integrated Children's Service Delivery System in Philadelphia

Our vision is a fully integrated system of care. The development of this system will involve families, consumers, funding sources, providers, advocates, service recipients, and related systems representatives, such as education and child welfare. This will be a cross-systems collaboration at all levels of service, from conceptualization and design through implementation and evaluation.

We envision a truly comprehensive array of evidence-based practices that promotes resilience and recovery among children and their families. The array emerges from the needs of children and families and recognizes the strength that emanates from embracing the diversity of Philadelphia's communities.

Guiding Themes and Principles

In the interest of creating of a system that better responds to the needs of children and families, The Philadelphia Alliance offers the following Guiding Themes and Principles that will be critical throughout this process.

Create a Full Array of Flexible Services

- Include all stakeholders in the conceptualization and design of a system for implementation of services, working from the service-delivery level upward.
- Develop and support service models that recognize the interrelationship of service delivery spanning prevention-based services through discharge planning and post-intervention follow-up, including the promotion of mental health.
- Emphasize the client-provider relationship as primary and respect team-level decisions regarding service-delivery recommendations.
- Establish flexible mechanisms for funding that support traditional and non-traditional (innovative) service/program delivery models based on real cost-based rates.
- Obtain waivers of regulation(s) in order to stretch current funding and expand services.

Establish a Culture of Collaboration Within and Across Systems Serving Children & Families.

- Establish integrated child and family case management at the service delivery level that permits continuity in relationships, across programs and service options.
- Establish a cross-systems Interagency Service Coordination process to more effectively serve children and families with more complex needs.
- Establish a transparent collaboration process across all levels. One example would be the alignment of service system planning meetings.

- Create a seamless system of care through the integration of services and resources.
- Ensure that funding mechanisms and program standards are aligned with a focus on collaboration and effective coordination among stakeholders.

Monitor and Maintain Adequate Access to Services

- Build an expanded system of parenting education and other prevention services that meets the needs of the community and allows families to access assistance before they reach a critical stage, including the promotion of mental health.
- Develop, maintain and provide timely dissemination of a list of all available services and programs available from all sources.
- Support full access to services geographically, culturally, financially, and logistically.
- Provide a uniform level of quality services to all children, adolescents, and families that will be delivered in an environment of a flexible continuum of care.
- Ensure adequate access to developmentally appropriate interventions to children of all ages, birth to 21, and their families, including individuals with dual diagnoses (i.e. MH/MR, MH/DA).
- Develop formalized systems for adolescents who are transitioning to adult service systems.

Encourage Cultural Competence as a Primary Need in Program Development

- Focus on the needs of the child and family with recognition of the ecology of the child's and family's worlds.
- Recognize that each community consists of unique and different cultural beliefs. Communities must be involved and develop a plan that fits the existing needs of their communities.
- Identify and utilize culturally sensitive best practices to reduce disparities in service delivery among children, youth, and families.
- Create inducements to attract culturally and linguistically diverse practitioners.

Establish High Expectation for Meaningful Clinical Outcomes

- Achieve measurable improvements in the outcomes of all children and families in the Behavioral Health System in Philadelphia.
- Deliver services with an emphasis on attaining client-level outcomes and fostering resilience.
- Utilize empirically-validated client-level outcome measures as performance indicators for program success and accountability.
- Establish linkages with the higher-education community to ensure that knowledgeable, credentialed, and skilled practitioners continue to be available to children and families.
- Organize around a data-based decision-making framework at all levels

Finally, we applaud the creation of a “blue ribbon panel” by Dr. Arthur Evans and DBH/MRS to develop a vision and plan a course for the development of a system of services for children and their families. We expect that this will be an inclusive, collaborative, participatory process; and it will be an excellent first step.

The members of The Philadelphia Alliance are committed to support the effort, participate fully, and provide leadership as the action steps unfold.