

Creating Mental Health Connections for Children and Youth in Foster Care

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The purpose of this project is to improve the screening and assessment for trauma and evidence based treatments for children, youth, and their families who are served in the Washington State public child welfare system.

The primary goals of this collaborative project are to:

- Improve the accessibility of evidence based mental health treatments that will enhance the safety, permanency, and wellbeing of children and youth in foster care with behavioral health care needs;
- Create efficient strategies to connect children, youth, and families with appropriate and evidence-based mental health practices (EBP); and
- Improve communication between social workers and mental health providers to ensure children, youth, and families with these needs are identified and referred to the best available services that will result in better outcomes for this population.

To achieve these goals we will align screening, assessment, and mental health evidence based treatments between the child welfare, mental health, and Medicaid systems for children and youth in foster care and their families by implementing these strategies:

- Create a 'learning community' with all primary stakeholders in the lives of children and families involved with the foster care system;
- Use validated screening measures (within child welfare) and measures of functional outcomes (within mental health), building on existing protocols in both systems;
- Streamline and standardize how we identify and refer youth to EBPs;
- Increase our mental health system capacity to deliver EBPs matched to the assessed needs of each child, emphasizing fidelity in a trauma-responsive manner;
- Create a feedback system between child welfare and mental health professionals to better coordinate and match mental health needs with EBPs for improved case planning efforts.

A process and outcome evaluation will document impacts on clients, services, and systems. Several recently enacted initiatives that complement this project's goals will be incorporated and leveraged to increase project breadth and reach.

Funding amount and use: Year one funding will support a comprehensive planning process. Funding for subsequent years two-five is contingent upon successful year one planning, and will be used to support infrastructure development, CA staff training, evidence-based practices service training, and evaluation-related activities. (\$639,320 for year one, subsequent years depend on successful planning)

Collaborative Partners:
Children's Administration
Division of Behavioral Health
and Recovery
Families and Youth
Health Care Authority
Harborview Center for Sexual
Assault and Traumatic Stress
University of Washington
Advisors:
Washington State Institute for
Public Policy

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