

Contact: Pam McKeown  
(405) 522-5102

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## **\$9.4 MILLION GRANT TO HELP CHILDREN WITH EMOTIONAL DISORDERS**

The Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services has received a \$9.4 million federal grant to aid children with serious emotional disorders and their families.

The grant, funded over a six-year period through the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), is based upon a highly successful concept known as “systems of care.”

“This is a significant development for our state,” said Mental Health Commissioner Dr. Terry Cline. “When combined with state and local resources, the total funding for this project will reach \$17 million over the next six years in newly designed services for our state’s children and their families.”

Oklahoma was one of only 18 sites out of more than 50 applicants selected to receive the grant, which recognizes a state’s commitment to a “partnership approach” for providing services.

“The ‘systems of care’ program is unique,” said Cline. “States must demonstrate viable partnerships between state agencies, local organizations, parents and advocates to have been considered in the funding competition.”

The Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services will

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lead the project. Other state agency partners include the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth, Oklahoma Department of Human Services, state Office of Juvenile Affairs, Oklahoma Department of Education and Oklahoma Health Care Authority.

The grant represents the culmination of a partnership formed in 1999 by the six state agencies.

According to the federal Center for Mental Health Services, at least one in 10 American children has a serious emotional disturbance, said Rand Baker, deputy commissioner for mental health services.

“Family members, teachers and others who care about these children know that emotional disturbance disrupts a child’s ability to interact effectively,” he said. “Families often turn to schools, mental health centers and other agencies for help in dealing with a child’s emotional disturbance. Sometimes, however, organizations that can help don’t work as a team to address all the family’s needs.”

By implementing a systems of care project, Oklahoma has taken an important step toward improving services for such families, he added. To date, Oklahoma has implemented systems of care on a limited basis in five counties – **Beckham, Canadian, Kay, Oklahoma and Tulsa**. These sites will serve as hubs for statewide expansion funded through the grant (**EDITORS: SEE ATTACHMENT**).

Janice Hendryx, director of the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth, said many families that have a child with severe emotional or behavioral problems find themselves involved in multiple systems.

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“Often a family will have a different caseworker and treatment plan from juvenile justice, child welfare, schools and mental health,” she said. “The systems of care approach brings these systems together to build on a family’s strengths and the family directs the treatment plan.”

By soliciting input from the child and family, local agency partners can plan and put into place a tailored set of services to meet the child’s physical, emotional, social, educational and family needs, Baker added. “Incorporating a variety of community support services – family, friends, neighbors and service providers – allows us to achieve much more positive results for the child.”

Systems of care programs in other states have yielded “impressive outcomes” in terms of children’s performance in school settings and the reduced need for out-of-home services, Baker said.

“These programs drastically reduce the number of costly hospital and residential treatment placements,” he said. “Children also behave and function better emotionally, and are less likely to become involved in the criminal justice system.”

Oklahoma’s collaborative systems of care project has enjoyed the “strong support of the leadership and staff of the state agencies involved,” as well as the governor and state legislature, Baker said.

“As a result, Oklahoma is in an excellent position for this to be a highly successful initiative – one that will make a major difference in the lives of our children, their families, and their communities.”

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:**

This grant will allow systems of care programs to be expanded on a countywide basis in the following areas, with statewide expansion to follow:

**El Reno** – Canadian County Caring for Kids, services provided through Chisholm Trail Counseling Services, 200 N. Choctaw. Contact: Tricia Robertson, project director, 405-262-6662.

**Elk City** – Beckham County Systems of Care, services provided through Red Rock West, 3080 W. Third St. Contact: Carol Stevenson, project director, at 580-323-6021, ext. 2223.

**Oklahoma City** – Oklahoma Kids Care-net, services provided through Northcare, Community Counseling Center, 2512 S. Harvey. Contact: Jackie Shipp, project director, 405-236-3574.

**Ponca City** – Kay County Circle of Care, services provided through Edwin Fair Community Mental Health Center, Inc., 1500 N. 6<sup>th</sup> St. Contact: Gary Wilburn, project director, 580-762-8121.

**Tulsa** – Tulsa County Systems of Care, services provided through Associated Centers for Therapy, 7010 S. Yale, Suite 215. Contact: Carl Haws, project director, 918-492-2554.

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