

Caring for Every Child's Mental Health

Children's Awareness Day!

National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day (Awareness Day) is a day for everyone to promote positive youth development, resilience, recovery, and the transformation of mental health services delivery for children and youth with serious mental health needs and their families. Awareness Day raises awareness of effective programs for children's mental health needs; demonstrates how children's mental health initiatives promote positive youth development, recovery, and resilience; and shows how children with mental health needs thrive in their communities. The 2010 Awareness Day is May 6th. In Oklahoma, special events will take place from Elk City to Tulsa including hundreds of Oklahomans from thirteen counties. The Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Oklahoma Systems of Care program has inspired these events to promote the importance of children's mental health and awareness of services available across Oklahoma to assist children, youth and their families.

Oklahoma Systems of Care projects stretch across 43 counties serving children and youth who have serious mental health issues. Late last year, data was released to confirm that a local system of care is working for hundreds of Oklahoma children and youth. According to data from the University of Oklahoma e-Team, children and youth receiving Wraparound services through their local Systems of Care showed a 54% decrease in school detentions and a 42% decrease in arrests.

The Dyer family, recently interviewed by ODMHSAS, had this to say about the Oklahoma Systems of Care project that served their son and family. "Our son would be in jail today if not for Oklahoma Systems of Care. Instead, he is in school, making good grades, a volunteer firefighter and looking forward to attending college."

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It's Time for a Revolution

By Sandra Spencer, Executive Director
National Federation of Families

It is time to better invest in our children. We need to put our resources into the healthy development and well being of our children now, rather than continue to spend huge amounts of resources to repair the impact of the lack of services and support in adulthood. How do we get everyone to finally pay attention to this need, our children, our future? We need a revolution! According to *dictionary.com*, "a revolution is a sudden, complete or marked change in something". I know revolution is a strong word, but in this case I am talking about an effort to completely mobilize all of us to speak with one voice and change the political will of our nation.

We have entered a new year and a new decade; we are experiencing economic downturn and fierce debates about health care reform. At the same time, our children are continuing to fall through the cracks.

One in every five children has a diagnosable mental health disorder, yet less than 25% ever get the help and support they need. In recent news, there has been full coverage about the Toyota car recall. There have been 39 deaths related to sticking gas peddles. While 39 deaths are 39 too many, there has been a national alarm sounded off about this issue. The CEO of Toyota had to stand before Congress to offer explanation. There has been national outrage. Where is the national media attention about children with mental health challenges? It is estimated that at least 75% of children and youth in juvenile detention have mental or emotional disorders that should be treated. These children have a much higher school dropout rate, are more likely to be bullied, and of all youth who are diagnosed with a mental illness, 1 in 8 has co-occurring substance abuse problems. These facts don't seem to move our nation to action. We need a revolution!

Lets continue to educate the country about children's mental health. Please join the National Federation of Families as we prepare for Children's Mental Health Awareness Week. Again this year, the National Federation declares the first week in May (May 2-8, 2010), Children's Mental Health Awareness Week. This is an opportunity for us to launch a national campaign on the local, state and national level.

We need you to help us—we need a revolution!



Harvard University Announcement

Harvard University announced that from now on undergraduate students from low-income families will pay no tuition. In making the announcement, Harvard's president Lawrence H. Summers said, "When only ten percent of the students in elite higher education come from families in the lower half of the income distribution, we are not doing enough."

If you know of a family earning less than \$60,000 a year with an honor student graduating from high school soon, Harvard University wants to pay the tuition. The prestigious university recently announced that from now on undergraduate students from low-income families can go to Harvard for free... no tuition and no student loans!

To find out more about Harvard offering free tuition for families making less than \$60,000 a year, visit Harvard's financial aid website at: <http://www.fao.fas.harvard.edu/> or call the school's financial aid office at (617) 495-1581.



Things Military Teens Want You to Know

From TimetoTalk.org, here are a few things military teens want you to know about them:

“We take on a lot of responsibility, but sometimes, it's too much.”

When military parents are deployed, their family responsibilities fall to the caregiver at home. It's common for teens and pre-teens to assume at least some of those responsibilities. Military youth express pride about gaining independence when their load increases, but unknowingly, parents sometimes assign adult responsibilities as a means of showing confidence, thus creating too high an expectation.

“In a lot of ways, we're just like other teens.”

What's normal? Whatever it is, it's something all teens strive for. And even though they may use military acronyms in their speech or have traveled to five states and two foreign countries before their 16th birthday, military teens are just like all the rest. They want to fit in, make friends, and have fun. One way to deal with the challenges of military life is to help them see what they have in common with other teens.

“We serve too.”

Strength, perseverance, and sacrifice are words associated with our troops, but we see these same traits in military teens. Military teens grow up with a sense of community and service to our country. Let's celebrate their achievements, recognize their efforts, and empower all youth through the powerful contributions they can make in their communities.



The Oklahoma Autism Network presents...

Everyday Intervention

Research has shown that children with ASD benefit from repeated opportunities to practice new skills across a variety of settings. In this training, we will discuss how families can use everyday routines to maximize their child's opportunities for learning. This training is being offered on the following upcoming dates:

May 13, 2010 Lawton, OK 10:30am-2:30pm
May 18, 2010 Oklahoma City 10:30am-2:30pm

If you are interested in registering please see the attached training brochure with registration information. If you have any questions please contact us at 405-271-7476 or okautism@ouhsc.edu.

April is Military Child Month

TimeToTalk.org is recognizing our nation's brave and resilient military families, children and youth because they are such an important part of communities across America and around the world.



What Should You Do If Your Child's IEP Gets Off Track

By Traci Castles. Oklahoma Systems of Care

It can be very upsetting to find out that your child's IEP is not being implemented as you thought it would be. This situation is typical for parents who call an advocate for assistance. Here is what I recommend parent's do when faced with this situation.

1. Stay calm and do NOT overreact.
2. Write down your concerns. Use specific examples that your child has reported or you have personally experienced. I recommend that all parents write down things as they happen, such as when your child reports that a teacher did not make accommodations. Write down all interactions with school staff (emails, phone conversations, etc.). I recommend that parents use a spiral notebook for written documentation; and keep all emails, letters, and school documents, such as progress reports, in a three-ring binder.
3. Begin by talking to your child's school, teacher, IEP team members, principal, or counselor about your concerns.
4. After you talk to the school and explain your concerns, write down your interpretation of what happened. If you are with the school staff, have them sign your written interpretation to make sure it's correct. If you are on the phone or using email, send your interpretation in letter format to the school personnel to confirm your understanding is correct.
5. Bring your notebook or folder to all school meetings. You can use this to back up your concerns as concrete issues.
6. You should bring someone with you to your meetings to take notes for you. Taking notes and trying to communicate effectively is very difficult to do by yourself, especially when you are talking about your child.
7. What if your child's school will not listen to your concerns or take action? You can contact people outside your child's school if you need additional help in getting your message across or need more information. In Oklahoma, you can call your Systems of Care team, the Oklahoma Parent Center at 877-553-4332, your district school board, or the Oklahoma State Department of Education for assistance.
8. Remember that your child's IEP is a living document that is meant to be updated and changed over time. You can have an IEP meeting anytime and as many times you need throughout the school year.
9. Hang in there. You are not alone. You have a system of care around you that will help you every step of the way.

Web Source: Web: <http://www.wrightslaw.com>, April 23, 2010.



What Should You Write Down?

- Who— Names of those who were part of the communication.
- Where— Where did communication occur (phone, in person, etc.)?
- When— Include date and time of meeting or communication.
- What— Recap of your conversation and what was said.
- How—Your understanding of how is the situation going to be resolved?

Stick to the facts!

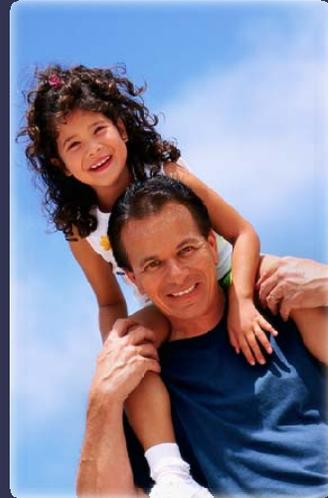
Do NOT include your emotional reactions when writing in your notebook or any communication to school personnel. This information will not be helpful and could work against you.

Fatherhood in America

Today more American children are growing up in homes without their biological father than at any other point in American history. Trends such as divorce and re-marriage, as well as more births outside of marriage, socioeconomic conditions, result in a diminishing role of fathers in the daily lives of their children. Involving fathers in the lives of their children becomes an even greater challenge when these children are involved in the public child welfare system. This is especially true in cases where the children has been removed from the home and placed in non-relative or stranger's care.

In 2006, the Urban Institute, under contract with the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, US Department of Health and Human Services, published its final report on child welfare agencies efforts to identify, locate, and involve non-resident fathers in the Youth/Child serving welfare process. Based on all of the findings, the report recommended, among other things, that child welfare agencies should do the following to involve fathers: (1) identify and search for non-resident fathers early into the intake process (2) train caseworkers such as (FSP's, and Care Coordinators) on identifying, locating, and involving fathers, and (3) develop models for engaging non-resident fathers constructively.

Diligent efforts to engage absent fathers in the planning of services for their child should be a team orientated approach that involves every member of the family team. The goal is to help maintain children's connection with formal and informal supports that are important in the lives of the family. An activity that supports a diligent engagement of absent fathers includes but is not limited to: Asking the mother and the child to assist in locating and engaging, Family team meetings that focus on maintaining family relationships and building on relationships, Completing a genogram as part of the family assessment; With the signed consent of the parent contacting other relatives to see if they have any known addresses or telephone numbers, and follow up on those leads. Engage these relatives in supporting the involvement of the father in the child's life.



How To Engage Fathers

- Engage and work with both non-resident and resident fathers proactively
- Interact with fathers in a gender-responsive, non accusatory and non-blaming manner
- Expect staff doing hiring for the organization to include fathers as participants/consultants in the new staff hiring process and in interviews
- Encourage the healthy development of the father-child relationship
- Promote meaningful and sustained father engagement in the life of his child
- Expect staff to make every effort to interact with fathers
- Provide information for fathers that include the benefits of a healthy marriage, child development, and men's wellness
- Have family identified restrooms or a diaper deck in the men's restroom
- If a resource library is available to families, make sure it includes parenting and other information directed toward fathers
- Believe that fathers are important to the healthy development of children
- Believe that fathers can be excellent parents
- Create training opportunities to examine staff attitudes, beliefs and behavior toward accepting and including fathers



Mark Your Calendar

UPCOMING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

May 3-4 & May 24-25	OKC	Fundamentals of Wraparound 101
June 14-15	Tulsa	Family Support Training
June 28-29	OKC	Family Support Training

CONFERENCES

April 28-30	Norman	Children's Behavioral Health Conference
May 4	Norman	OK Parent Center Conference

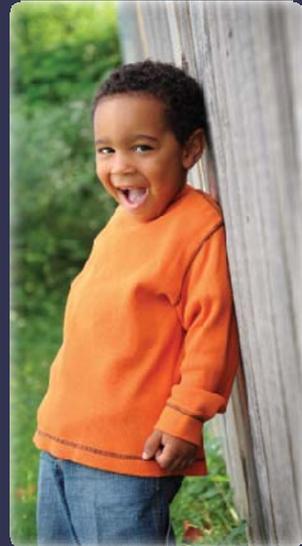
For more information, go to

<http://www.oklahomaparentscenter.org/>

August 31-Sept 2	Norman	OK Child Abuse and Neglect Conference
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For more information, contact

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