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NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN TULSA TO FOCUS ON CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

On June 3-6, more than a thousand mental health and substance abuse experts from across the country will meet in Tulsa to discuss effective ways to treat children with serious emotional disturbances and their families.

Sponsored by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the conference will focus on making community treatment programs known as "systems of care" more successful at addressing the needs of children and families coping with mental health and substance abuse issues.

The event will be held at the Adams-Mark Hotel in downtown Tulsa.

Dr. Terry Cline, commissioner of the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, will be among those providing the welcome and opening remarks from 8:30-9:30 a.m. at the Wednesday, June 4, session. Oklahoma was one of 18 sites recently selected to receive a \$9.4 million federal "systems of care" grant. To date, Oklahoma has implemented systems of care on a limited basis in five counties – Tulsa, Oklahoma, Beckham, Canadian and Kay – with another five counties in development.

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“Children with serious emotional disturbance and substance abuse problems must overcome significant obstacles such as addiction, access to necessary, comprehensive services, and cultural issues,” Cline said. “Finding innovative ways to help them overcome these obstacles through systems of care is an important priority.”

Nationally, statistics indicate that approximately one in 10 children in the United States has a serious emotional disturbance, and as many as 40 percent of youth in community treatment programs abuse substances. Systems of care programs have proved effective in helping these children. After one year in a systems of care program, substance abuse decreased by one-third and marijuana use decreased by nearly 20 percent. Participants in the program dramatically reduced their use of inpatient psychiatric hospitalizations, decreased their contacts with law enforcement, and significantly reduced the number of school suspensions.

A community based, comprehensive system of care helps children and adolescents with serious emotional disturbances lower levels of severe behavioral difficulties. Within systems of care, children, youth and families work together with service providers to develop, manage, deliver and evaluate mental health policies and programs. The goal is to deliver services that are responsive to children and their families through an integrated service system that meets their diverse, individual and changing needs.

Speakers at the conference include representatives from federal and state government, tribal nations, child and family advocates, parents, caregivers, youth and

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others. Highlights of the conference include topics such as: screening for co-occurring disorders; using traditional healing practices in substance abuse treatment for American Indian/Alaska Native youth; achieving cultural and linguistic competence; and youth perspectives on substance abuse and recovery.

The conference will be hosted by the Center for Mental Health Services and the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, both divisions within SAMHSA, a public health agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

For more information about the conference, contact Donna Sledge, systems of care communications/technical assistance coordinator for the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, at 405-522-4156.

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GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION DESIGNATING JUNE 4 'SYSTEMS OF CARE' DAY

WHEREAS, Systems of Care serves the families of Oklahoma by improving their communication, their parent-child relationships, their problem-solving skills, and their overall healthy functioning; and

WHEREAS, Systems of Care promotes healthy and stable lifestyles for youth and their families; and

WHEREAS, Systems of Care teaches families to work as a team and to effectively advocate for their needs; and

WHEREAS, Systems of Care was established in the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services through the efforts of the Legislature and a consortium of state agencies charged with proper care of Oklahoma's families with children who experience mental health issues; and

WHEREAS, Systems of Care is sincerely appreciated by the more than 500 people it has served, as well as by Oklahoma on the whole; and

WHEREAS, the Tulsa Systems of Care has served more than 250 people and is growing rapidly, as well as Kay, Oklahoma, Canadian, Beckham, Custer counties and the Norman site; and

WHEREAS, Systems of Care will have a positive impact on generations to come;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BRAD HENRY, Governor of the State of Oklahoma, do hereby proclaim June 4, 2003, as

"SYSTEMS OF CARE DAY"

in the state of Oklahoma.