



**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

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Gary L. Hoscheid  
Department of Legislative Audit  
427 South Chapelle  
Pierre, SD 57501

Dear Mr. Hoscheid,

This letter is written in response to the July 28, 2008 correspondence from Senator Jason M. Gant, Chair of the Government Operations and Audit Committee, requesting an evaluation report of the outcomes of the project funded by the FY2007 contract carryover involving Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education for \$125,000.

There is no evaluation report of the outcomes per se as the contract carryover funding was used for the readiness assessment, strategic planning, training, and technical assistance for the System of Care Pilot Project as identified in my previous letter. Attached is a report describing further details of the project facilitated and coordinated by WICHE. The outcomes of this contract carryover project identify that each of the phases were carried out and conducted as planned, which they were.

The true measurement of the effectiveness of this pilot project will be measured over time as this is a transformational activity and is a dramatic shift from how services are currently being provided. We plan to measure outcomes related to service delivery such as the level of service integration for children, youth and their families, workforce competencies, fewer long-term out-of-home placements, and decreased involvement with the courts and/or DOC. However, we can not measure this until the system has had time to implement the infrastructure to support the system of care model and trained providers, families, school personnel, etc., on how services will be provided within the system of care.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Jerry C. Hofer  
Secretary

## **System of Care Pilot Project**

The Division of Mental Health is currently undertaking a *System of Care Pilot Project*, which seeks to:

1. Develop and implement a project in the Rapid City area to provide family-driven, youth-guided, community-based, and culturally and linguistically competent services to children, youth, and their families;
2. Promote consensus-building activities among appropriate agencies, organizations, and family members to develop a shared vision and strategic plan for designing, implementing, and evaluating system of care infrastructure and services;
3. Develop a full array of services that meet or exceed specified quality assurance standards for these children and their families in collaboration with service providers and other state agencies;
4. Develop a competent workforce through the provision of training on essential components within the system of care framework, such as wraparound development and the delivery of evidence-based practices; and
5. Evaluate the outcome of the project with the goal of implementing successful elements into a statewide behavioral services delivery system.

### **Phase One: Community Readiness Assessment**

As one component of this project, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) Mental Health Program conducted a community readiness assessment of key stakeholders in Rapid City. Community readiness evaluations identify specific characteristics related to different levels of problem awareness and readiness for change in a given community. Communities differ in many ways, especially regarding the various resources that can facilitate systems change. Amongst professionals and families who were interviewed, there was unanimous and strong agreement regarding the importance of providing integrated, family-driven services. Rapid City's community was described as open-minded, generous, and receptive to new ideas and changes. Numerous respondents noted that Rapid City favored originality and uniqueness, thus making the community an ideal site to implement a successful system of care.

Overall, Rapid City fell into the beginning stages of community readiness, which involved recognition of the issue as a problem and an understanding that the existing leadership is in need of assistance to develop a plan of action. The Rapid City Pilot Project leaders identified that parent partnerships were necessary to create an effective system of care, and invited two parents to join the project. Additionally, Pilot Project stakeholders are in the process of recruiting two Native American parents.

### **Phase Two: Family Welcoming Meeting & Search Conference**

Phase two of the project included a Family Welcoming Meeting and Search Conference. Barbara Huff of the Federation of Families, in conjunction with SD Advisory Council Chair, Amanda Lautenschlager, partnered with the Pilot Project Team to officially welcome families to participate in this system transformation. At

the meeting, families shared their concerns and needs regarding services, and identified how they could participate at the local and State levels.

The Family Welcoming Meeting was immediately followed by a Search Conference, facilitated by WICHE consultant, Richard Mettler. The Search Conference, entitled, *Expanding Partnerships: The Future of Integrated Services for Children and Families*, was held in Rapid City with the goal of developing a specific action plan and exploring necessary components of an effective system of care (including how it will function and steps to achievement). Professionals from different agencies and disciplines, families of consumers, and community members participated in conference activities.

The purpose of the Search Conference was to identify strategies and create an action plan toward the integration of systems (behavioral health and other necessary systems) into a coordinated network to meet the multiple and changing needs of children and their families. The importance of cultivating partnerships between parents and professionals was also addressed. The Search Conference participants agreed to prioritize family-driven care (i.e., families have a primary decision making role in the care of their children, as well as the policies and procedures governing care for all children in their community, State, Tribe, territory, and nation).

### **Phase Three: Wraparound Training**

Phase three of the System of Care Pilot Project included the application of an effective, reputable Wraparound Curriculum. Wraparound is a family centered, individualized way to reach out to families with complex, unmet needs. It is about meeting needs and producing results that reflect a family's culture, priorities, and values. This particular curriculum was chosen after extensive research on behalf of WICHE. National SoC experts endorsed these training materials, including faculty at the University of South Florida, Mental Health Institute. This phase focused on the values and principles that define the wraparound process, including: (1) the concept of therapeutic intensity; (2) how Wraparound and other community-based services can provide maximum support and treatment within nonrestrictive, community settings; and (3) meeting family needs in ways that match each family's strengths, culture, values and goals.

### **WICHE Technical Assistance**

The WICHE Mental Health Program provides technical assistance by partnering with states to address rural mental health issues. Specific tasks, priorities, and action plans were developed based on the distinct needs of South Dakota, as it is understood that an effective system of care must reflect the particular community in which it exists. WICHE Research Associates have successfully facilitated all three phases of the System of Care Pilot Project, and have provided the team with numerous resources.