

Project Title: National Network Project for Children with Special Needs  
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## I. PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT AND RELATIONSHIP TO SSA TITLE

V MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH (MCH) PROGRAMS: Children with special health care needs (CSHN) and their families often struggle under the burdens of a lack of community-based services and/or fragmented and uncoordinated care. Children with moderate to severe psychiatric problems are estimated to be 14-20% of the youth in this country, yet approximately only 2% of all children currently utilize mental health services due to attitudinal barriers and problems in the service system. The service delivery system for youth with emotional disorders has been characterized as fragmented and uncoordinated. In addition, there are special populations of children for whom the problems of the service delivery system are particularly intensified including children of military personnel, children of color, children living in rural areas and children living in cities.

In the past decade numerous studies have documented that populations of children/youth with multiple and complex needs require a system of care. In this ten-year period, multiple federal initiatives have been undertaken to respond to this documented need for system of care development. Despite these efforts, the examples of organized systems of care in communities are still limited and in various stages of development, and there is still a significant need to continue systems development efforts.

The purpose of this project was to create networks and partnerships, knowledge and products and provide training and technical assistance to support states and communities in implementing systems of care for CSHN and their families.

Over the span of the cooperative agreement, project staff working in collaboration with multiple other MCHB funded national centers and MCHB Division of Children with Special Health Care Needs central office staff assisted in the development, elaboration, dissemination and promotion of the Healthy People 2010 outcomes for CSHCN.

II. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: Goal 1. To foster and enhance cross-system and private/public collaboration at the national, state, and local levels to support the development of systems of care in the context of system reform efforts. Objective 1.1: Provide a structure for communities and states to participate in a national network to promote and support family-centered, coordinated, culturally competent care in communities for children with, or at risk for, special health and mental health needs and their families. Objective 1.2 Facilitate communication and foster supportive relationships among states and communities in the network for information and resource sharing. Objective 1.3 Provide and support opportunities for collaborative planning and problem solving for members of multiple systems, both public and private. Objective 1.4 Provide technical assistance to states and communities on cross-system collaboration.

GOAL 2. To assist states and communities in planning and implementing the infrastructure for systems of care for children with special needs, and those at risk, in the context of system reforms. Objective 2.1 Provide technical assistance to states and communities on key elements of developing a system of care. Objective 2.2 Develop and make available state-of-the-art information on system development and implementation.

Objective 2.3 Synthesize knowledge on methodologies and indicators to assess system development in communities. Objective 2.4 Develop materials and provide technical assistance on system reform efforts and the implications of these initiatives on systems of care for children at risk for, or with special needs, and their families.

GOAL 3. To increase meaningful family involvement in the development of systems of care in states and communities and foster the development of effective family organizations. Objective 3.1 Collaborate with organizations representing families with children with, or at risk for, special needs and involve families in all aspects of the National Network Project. Objective 3.2 Provide technical assistance, information, and training to states and communities on involving families at the policy, planning and treatment levels in systems of care.

III. METHODOLOGY: The National Network Project, which included under its umbrella the Maternal and Child Health Bureau's (MCHB) Network for Children with Special Health Care Needs and the Center for Mental Health Services' (CMHS) National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health provided a multifaceted approach to achieving the goals and objectives of this project. These approaches included: (1) coalition building, collaboration, and liaison (2) consensus development; (3) materials/knowledge development and dissemination; (4) meetings and training; and (5) technical assistance consultation and information brokering.

IV. EVALUATION: The evaluation plan involved extensive feedback from the field and project constituents, including a comprehensive impact survey of project methodologies and activities conducted in the fourth year of the project.

V. RESULTS/OUTCOMES: The project created and supported the Communities

of Excellence recognition program with the FICC; provided targeted technical assistance on children's mental health and system of care issues to 50 states, VI, PR, Guam, Native American Tribes and Reservations and selected communities; enhanced collaboration between mental health and child welfare systems; studied and reported on the impact of welfare reform on mental health resources and services for children and families; provided technical assistance to CMHS Statewide Family Network Grantees; collaborated on a project to track the impact of health care reform on children/youth with mental health disorders and their families; created and provided training on collaborative decision-making for parents, educators and providers; participated in initiatives on standards, outcomes and quality indicators for child behavioral health; provided leadership, training and TA on early childhood mental health; provided leadership and training on cultural competence in mental health services; assisted states and communities in building capacity for service system evaluation, supported efforts of the FICC Integrated Services Committee and participated in development of the MCHB 2010 core outcomes effort.

VI. PUBLICATIONS/PRODUCTS: The project produced 62 publications.

VII. DISSEMINATION/UTILIZATION OF RESULTS: Documents were distributed at the 39 meetings and conferences of the project as well as others where project faculty presented. All documents are available by contacting our documents distribution coordinator and many are available on our web site. Over project period over 50,000 hard copies of documents were distributed.

VIII. FUTURE PLANS/FOLLOW-UP: To seek funds for future initiatives.

IX. TYPE/AMOUNT OF SUPPORT AND RESOURCES NEEDED TO REPLICATE: \$3 million annually.

## National Network Project for Children with Special Needs

**ANNOTATION:** The National Network Project for Children with Special Needs was designed to support countries, states, territories and communities in building family-centered, culturally competent, community-based systems of integrated services and supports for children with or at risk for a wide range of special needs. The project promoted systems development with an array of partners in the public and private sectors by providing training and technical assistance, developing and disseminating information and convening meetings and workshops.

**KEY WORDS:** CSHN, severe emotional problems, community systems, family-centered care, cultural competence, managed care