

Systems of Care Newsletter

Jefferson County
Systems of Care

Volume I, Issue I

February 2006

Letter from the Program Manager

Jefferson County Department of Human Services received a five-year Health and Human Services grant for "Improving Child Welfare Outcomes through Systems of Care" in October 2003. In an effort to share the many exciting activities of this grant, this Newsletter will be published two times a year. This is our inaugural issue.

What is Systems of Care (SOC)? The goals of the grant are to:

1. Strengthen the Child Welfare infrastructure for interagency and community collaboration.
2. Institutionalize individualized, strength-based care practice.
3. Enhance the cultural competency of Jefferson County agencies and providers.
4. Assure family involvement in all aspects of the system.
5. Institutionalize effective accountability mechanisms.

The first year of the grant was spent hiring staff, gathering data, assessing the needs and resources of the community, and strategic planning. We provided leadership and support for a three-day state-wide conference at Red Rocks in November 2004 to promote a common understanding and awareness of Systems of Care.

The second year of the grant has focused on strengthening the Child Welfare infrastructure for interagency and community collaboration. An Advisory Group was formed consisting of members of the Department of Human Services, the county attorney's office and the Court Ap-

pointed Special Advocate Program known as CASA. Various subcommittees of this group have focused on interagency training, family participation, sharing of information across systems, coordination of treatment plans and resources, evaluation, social marketing, cultural competency and collaborative management.

The third year of the grant will build off of year 2's activities by continuing to assist agencies in getting to know one another and to involve families in decision-making committees. Mentoring opportunities for clients who have successfully gone through the Child Welfare system to mentor current clients going through the system will be developed. The grant will also focus on cultural competence and accountability. The grant will be expanding its membership on the Advisory Committee so that other agencies are represented.

We are looking forward to a very full year of activities, partnerships and collaboration. We hope that the many child and family serving agencies throughout Jefferson County will offer their ideas and energy by developing partnerships and spreading the word about the work being done.

Sincerely,



Susan Franklin

Inside this issue:

<i>Mapping</i>	2
<i>Collaborative Management</i>	2
<i>Clocks</i>	3
<i>Evaluation</i>	3
<i>Training Opportunities</i>	4
<i>Client Orientations</i>	5

Vision

Keeping Our Children Safe Through Healthy Families and Strong Communities."

Mission Statement

The mission of the Systems of Care project is to promote the welfare of children and families through the development of sustainable partnerships that provide integrated, quality services that are individualized, strength based, family centered and culturally competent.

Mapping Areas of Highest Need in the Community



SOC Research Analyst Julie Morales with Jefferson County map

One of the important questions that the SOC grant wants to address is—Where are the areas of greatest need in our community? One way we found to look at this was to identify where most of our referrals come from. SOC Research Analyst Julie Morales, in collaboration with Family to Family workers Jennifer O’Connell and Shelly Jordan began working to prepare data on the location of our child abuse and neglect (CAN) referrals. We provided that data to our Planning and Zoning contact and Global Information Systems (GIS) specialist Kirk

Hagaman. Kirk worked his GIS magic and created a map of CAN referrals. This map shows referral location, number and ethnicity of children for each referral, and median income of that geographical area for all of Jefferson County. These types of maps will be extremely helpful to the SOC grant, The Division of Children, Youth and Families, and other SOC partners who are interested in targeting services in the areas of greatest need in our community.

Collaborative Management of Multi-Agency Services Provided to Children and Families (HB1451)



Who are we? (left to right)
Susan Franklin, Program Manager;
Melinda Veith, Parent Partner
Coordinator; Ashleigh Sedbrook,
Training Coordinator; Julie
Morales, Research Analyst; Linda
Zschoche, Child Welfare Consultant

There has been a great deal of interest in HB1451 since its passage by the Colorado State Legislature in 2004. Seven counties throughout the State submitted Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) to the State Department in order to possibly realize some incentive money the State is giving to those counties who meet or exceed certain outcomes. Six counties remain in the running trying to figure out exactly what HB1451 is all about and how to accomplish all that it requires.

What is HB1451? It is a piece of legislation that builds off of two earlier pieces of legislation in the hope of forcing counties to be more fiscally responsible while adding incentive money for meeting or exceeding outcomes. It encourages a more cooperative approach with families and allows counties greater

flexibility in the use of funds. HB1451 is voluntary and calls for a MOU between certain identified agencies within the county, namely the local judicial district, including probation, the schools, mental health, behavioral health, the health department and the county department of social services. It is hoped that by establishing a partnership between these agencies there will be a reduction in the duplication and elimination of fragmented services, greater cost-sharing and better outcomes for children and families.

Jefferson County did not submit a MOU in the first year. The mandatory partners listed above as well as the Juvenile Assessment Center, the Developmental Disabilities Resource Center, the Department of Youth Corrections and family members

are presently meeting twice a month to look at how we can pool resources and identify outcomes that we can meet or exceed as a county. The process is long and difficult however it is hoped that a MOU will be developed, signed by all Department Heads and submitted to the State Department by the spring of 2006. It is doubtful that staff will see any significant change in “the way we do business” in Jefferson County in the first year of the MOU. If we succeed in receiving some incentive money in the fall of 2007 there may be some exciting, different and new things that we, as a county, can do with that money. Only time will tell!

What Are These Clocks?

You will see clocks in child and family serving agencies around Jefferson County with the words Cultural Competence on them. Why are they there and what do they mean? Well, in an effort to promote the Systems of Care principles, the grant purchased clocks with the words “Cultural Competence” on the face of the clock. We hope to purchase more clocks with “Family Involvement” and Interagency Collaboration” on them.

The clocks are to encourage discussion and thought about the principles.

For example, the Cultural Competence clocks will hopefully generate thought and discussion regarding:

Am I being culturally competent?

What does it mean to be culturally competent?

Am I offering culturally competent services?

If I am not offering culturally competent services, how can I access them in this community?

What type of questions should I ask families that will lead to a discussion regarding their culture?

What do I need to be more culturally competent?

How can the agency I work for help me be more culturally competent?

These are just some ideas of how these clocks can be used to send a message but also how they can be used to train others and dialogue about the importance of Cultural Competence.

We hope that you will see more of these clocks in the coming months.



Systems of Care Evaluation– What’s the Big Deal?

Evaluations sometimes get a bad rap. Participating in a research study by filling out a survey or putting together an evaluation is right up there with “watching paint dry” for most people. But SOC evaluations are different and unique because they seek to include input from families. How does that work...you might ask? Well, let’s say you want to figure out what problems families encounter when they are trying to get their lives back together. If parents are required to complete a list of tasks before they can get their children back from foster care, what are the things that make that process harder or easier? The SOC evaluation subcommittee has been designing a family focus group project with the help of several Parent Partners. Our Parent Partners are parents who have successfully navigated the child welfare system, completed all of their required services, and moved on with their lives. These parents are an invaluable source of information about the barriers and challenges that families face when they are going through very difficult times. Our Parent Partners have been helping us to frame our questions around the most important issues that families face. We are using their ideas and feedback to design our family focus group protocol and it has been an interesting and informative experience for everyone involved. The information we gather in our family focus groups will then help to inform further decisions about how to improve the child welfare system and make our services more family friendly. We want to say a special thank you to all the Parent Partners who are involved.



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Training Opportunities

In order to achieve inter-agency collaboration many cross-system training opportunities have been developed by Systems of Care. These opportunities include Partner Informational Trainings, Quarterly Open Houses, Hallway Displays, a Scavenger Hunt, as well as other various trainings. Workforce Development and Community Assistance kicked off the cross-system opportunities in August 2005 with a one-hour Partner Informational Training for 45 employees. The Child Protection Intake unit followed in September 2005 with another one-hour Partner Informational Training for 60 people. In October 2005 the first Scavenger Hunt for 70 people was im-

plemented to provide an experiential training for folks. Participants were given a scenario of a family going through numerous systems. The participants had to go to those agencies and get information about their services. The participants reported that this training was extremely useful as they were able to see what clients need to go through. Beginning in 2006 these cross-system opportunities will be offered monthly. Partners from throughout the county will be invited to attend. Watch for the postings of these opportunities in the Newsletter, on the Human Services Intranet under Systems of Care, in emails from Ashleigh Sedbrook and on flyers.

Client Orientations Coming Soon!

Families new to the Child Welfare System often feel confused, frustrated and have lots of questions. Others have had the same experience and have successfully navigated the system. These folks are called Parent Partners and they want to help others understand the Child Welfare System and the Court process that often times goes along with being involved in Child Welfare.

Coming soon are Orientations that will be co-led by a Parent Partner and an ex-caseworker from the Child Welfare System. These two-hour Orientations will assist new clients in understanding the roles of each professional, the court process, the treatment plan, and a host of other information. Daycare and food will be provided and the book "A Family's Guide to the Child Welfare System" will be given to each participant. Orientations will be held the second Tuesday of the month from 10-11:30 A.M. and the fourth Tuesday from 6-7:30 P.M. RSVP to Melinda Veith at 303-271-4367