

CWIC Notes

Connecting Where It Counts

Topic: Children's Mental Health

Project: Children's Mental Health Roundtable

Date of Issue: September 2005

Introduction

A roundtable event focusing on children's mental health was hosted by the Hennepin-University Partnership (H-UP) on July 20, 2005, involving key stakeholders from both organizations. The impetus for the roundtable stemmed from a mutual interest on the part of Hennepin County's Human Services and Public Health Department and the University of Minnesota's Center of Excellence in Children's Mental Health, to bring together the expertise of both organizations around this complex and critical issue. Jamie Halpern, Manager of Hennepin's Children's Mental Health Service Area, and Cari Michaels, Coordinator of the University's Center of Excellence in Children's Mental Health worked with Kathie Doty, H-UP Liaison, to ensure that this mutual interest would fit well within H-UP's mission to assist the county and the University to "connect where it counts."

Background for the Event

That children's mental health is a clear priority for both organizations is evidenced by the support of Hennepin's Leadership Action Group and University of Minnesota President Robert Bruinink's Presidential Initiative on Children, Youth and Families, which provides funding for the Center of Excellence in Children's Mental Health. The Leadership Action Group (LAG) is an ad hoc group chaired by Hennepin County Commissioner Gail Dorfman and comprised of more than 25 senior officials from the County including County Commissioner Linda Koblick, public school districts, private agencies, a representative from the University of Minnesota, parents and advocates. Since its inception, the LAG has been increasing in formality as it seeks to influence policy direction in the area of children's mental health. The University's Presidential Initiative on Children, Youth and Families was launched by President Bruinink in

2003 as a "catalyst for cross-sector partnerships" around key issues involving children, youth and families across the state. Drs. Martha Erickson and Richard Weinberg co-chair the Initiative.

In 2003, LAG's interest in greater collaboration in the area of children's mental health contributed toward President Bruinink's establishment of the Center of Excellence in Children's Mental Health (CECMH) as a part of his Presidential Initiative. The center is funded by the President's office and located within the University's Children, Youth and Family Consortium (CYFC) which is headed by Dr. Cathy Jordan and facilitates interdisciplinary coordination within the University. CECMH seeks to forge greater collaboration, access to resources and dissemination of information in the field of children's mental health statewide.

Roundtable goals

The goals for the roundtable event included facilitating direct connections between individuals from Hennepin County and the University by creating the opportunity to communicate the interests and activities of both organizations, meet colleagues, develop a directory of names and contact information, discuss overall policy issues, and identify potential additional infrastructure components to help promote future collaboration.

Summary of Proceedings

The event began with opening comments from Hennepin County Commissioner Linda Koblick, University of Minnesota Assistant Vice President of Community Partnerships Sheila Ards, and Hennepin County Commissioner Gail Dorfman. Commissioner Koblick opened the meeting by describing H-UP, still in its first year of existence, which has strong support from both the Hennepin County Board of

For more information on the Hennepin-University Partnership go to <http://www.cura.umn.edu/H-UP.php> or email Kathie Doty at kdoty@umn.edu

Commissioners and the University of Minnesota's Office of System Administration. Commissioner Koblick was an initiator in the creation of the H-UP and continues to provide policy leadership for this effort. She also made note of her particular interest in children's mental health issues as evidenced by her support for a partnership in western Hennepin County between seven family service collaboratives and their respective 12 police departments, and the Relate Counseling Center to provide mental/chemical health assessment, counseling, and educational and support services to youth and their families.

Representing the University's Office of System Administration, Associate Vice President of Community Partnerships Sheila Ards noted her own experience working with child victims of sexual abuse in addition to expressing the full support of the University for this kind of collaborative work. Dr. Ards expressed the hope that this important event, bringing together the University's academic expertise with Hennepin County's public policy and practitioner perspectives, would set the stage for the next level of work and collaboration between the two organizations for the benefit of the children of this community and beyond.

To finish the opening remarks, Hennepin County Commissioner Gail Dorfman emphasized research studies at the local, state, and national level that found that the children's mental health system is not working effectively to meet the growing needs for intervention and prevention. Commissioner Dorfman noted that the system can be overly complex and fragmented. This results in uneven access to the continuum of services. In addition, Commissioner Dorfman observed that a 15-year lag-time often exists between the development of scientific knowledge in research and implementation through treatment on the front lines.

Not only do system deficiencies exist, stated Commissioner Dorfman, but a stigma surrounding mental health persists despite public efforts to debunk this negative image. In closing, Commissioner Dorfman offered a call to bring together the collective resources present in the room to streamline system delivery, translate research into practice and eliminate, through public education, the stigma that remains surrounding mental health.

Following the keynote addresses, Jamie Halpern and Cari Michaels provided an overview of each organization's structure with regard to units engaged in children's mental health activities. [attach: organizational charts]. All participants then had the opportunity to introduce themselves to the group. More than 60 administrators, faculty members, and other professionals from both organizations were in attendance along with representatives from the Hennepin County LAG and the U of M CECMH Steering Committee.

To further pursue collaborative dialogue and the development of "next steps," participants engaged in small group discussions around their tables. Several key themes emerged as table discussions were reported out to the whole group. These themes included:

- Exploring need for further training
- Establishing regular dialogue between the two organizations
- Development of common research priorities
- Facilitating cross-membership on key committees within each organization
- Continuing to develop the CECMH experts database on individuals, organizations and electronic documents related to children's mental health

Outcomes and Next Steps

As a result of the roundtable, several next steps were outlined for future follow-up:

- Convene a joint group to address training priorities and opportunities
- Facilitate cross-membership on key leadership committees in both organizations (Center of Excellence in Children's Mental Health Steering Committee and Hennepin's LAG)
- Discussion of policy and practice issues within leadership groups
- Examine opportunities to include input from other counties
- Develop joint research priorities in children's mental health
- Continue to build the CECMH database which provide listings of experts, organizations, and publications relevant to children's mental health.

Contact Information

Jamie Halpern and Cari Michaels have agreed to continue to lead in implementing these next steps with support from both organizations. For more information about this effort, please contact:

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