



Parent Partnerships Project for Children's Mental Health: Access to Services

Background

In the fall of 2003, PACER Center's Parent Partnership Project for Children's Mental Health conducted a survey to better understand what parents and families need from the children's mental health system in Minnesota. The research team developed a survey questionnaire, a telephone interview, and a focus group session directed at learning what was working in the children's mental health services system and what could be improved. There were 213 participants, including diverse families. These talking points can be used to educate other groups and organizations about concerns within the children's mental health system.

Parents identified access to service as a top concern

- **Difficulty in finding adequate services**
 - 66.4 percent of the participants rated finding adequate mental health services for their child as difficult to very difficult.
- **Difficulty in employment because of finding and keeping services**
 - 42.2 percent of participants noted that it was difficult to very difficult to find and keep employment because of lack of access to adequate support and services for meeting their child's mental health needs.

Talking points recommendations:

- The system needs to be made easier for families (better access to services) and this should be a top priority. It should not be so hard to access and receive children's mental health services.
- Parents and families need to be supported in their efforts to secure mental health services for their children. The system that was to provide services was often seen to restrict access to the very services needed.
- The service system staff needs to be trained for the positions that they hold and be held accountable for providing the services that are required by law. Create new laws where needed so as to assure that children who are entitled to services actually receive quality services.
- Information defining a child's right to access the mental health service system needs to be consumer friendly, readily available, culturally competent, and accessible to families.