



Parent Partnerships Project For Children's Mental Health: The Commitment of Financial Resources

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 families representing diversity. These talking points can be used to educate other groups and organizations about concerns within the children's mental health system.

Mental health services need to be reimbursed fairly

Funding for Children's mental health is seen as grossly inadequate. It must:

- Reflect the parity between mental health services and reimbursement rates.
- Allow for grants that are targeted specifically for children's mental health (to address respite, crisis, and other services required under the Children's Mental Health Act).
- Create a way to help schools find funding sources.
- Coordinate those services so that children and youth can receive the help they need to reach their Individualized Education Program, Individual Family Service Plan, or Individual Interagency Intervention Plan goals.

Talking points recommendations:

- Families are often lost in the maze of funding for mental health services.
- The child's right to effective treatment needs to be clearly defined by insurers and providers.
- Schools also have the obligation to serve children in identified areas of disability, but they do not always have adequate resources or collaborative agreements with other child-serving agencies.
- Forty four percent of the families were dissatisfied with the services their child was receiving.

The service system must be accountable for services that are required by law

Fund the Minnesota Comprehensive Children's Mental Health Act

- An excellent framework for the delivery of services that families need in order to keep their children at home and their families healthy

Talking points recommendations:

- Fifty two percent of the families in this survey reported that it was difficult to find and keep a job when they had a child with mental health needs in the family.
- Two-thirds of the respondents found it difficult or very difficult to find day care services and less than 4 percent of respondents were very satisfied with the day care services they received.
- Families were promised services that were never delivered because of lack of providers or difficulty in accessibility.
- Many families expressed dismay and anger on not knowing what options were available to their child. Information defining a child's right to access the mental health service system needs to be readily available to families.