

# Families Together in Albany County



**Vision:** An efficient and integrated system of care to serve and support children and youth with serious social, emotional, and behavioral concerns and their families.

**Mission:** Families Together in Albany County represents a system of care designed to significantly improve coordination of, access to, and effectiveness of services for children and youth with serious emotional disturbance who may also have behavioral concerns. The system of care will enhance community-based, culturally competent, and family-driven services to support and empower children and youth and their families.

**Core Values:** Family Driven, Youth Guided, Community-Based, Strength-Based, Culturally and Linguistically Competent.

## Context

### Populations of Concern:

- Eligibility: Families of children, adolescents, and young adults ages birth through 21 with serious social, emotional, and behavioral issues in Albany County.
- Specialty Sub-Groups:
  - Young children (0-5)
  - Adolescents and young adults (12-21) with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse issues
  - Transitioning youth (16-21).

### System Strengths:

- [Albany County Department for Children, Youth and Families](#) created in 2001. Children's Mental Health Unit with Centralized Intake Unit added in 2004.
- [County Executive](#) invested in children's mental health and system of care.
- Existing governance structure at the state, county, and local levels committed to coordinating children's services ([CCSI](#)).
- Existing family involvement through [local](#) and [state](#) groups.

### System Issues:

- Funding: Categorical ("silo") funding
- Access: Access to care barriers, delays, shortage of child psychiatrists
- Records & Automation: No common records, antiquated internal data systems, no cross-system MIS
- Training & Partnership Development: Need cross-system training, development of culturally competent care, establish meaningful relationships among community-based agencies, schools, and the county
- Community Awareness: Lack of knowledge/understanding of children's mental health, available services

## Strategies

### Direct Services

- Family Resource Centers
- Social Work Clinicians
- Circle of Support (Wraparound Services)
- Family Team Conferencing & Individualized Service Plans
- Parent Educational Workshops and Training

### Direct Family and Youth Support

- Parent Partner Family Support
- Youth Empowerment Program
- Parent Support Groups
- 1 to 1 Family Support and Advocacy
- Respite

### System Infrastructure

- Partnership development
- Cross-system training
- Social marketing
- Family and youth involvement
- Youth Advisory Board
- Customized, on-site Management Information System

### Governance Structure

- Project Oversight (CCSI Tier II)
- Executive Committee
- Project workgroup
- Sub-workgroups, advisory groups

## Outcomes

### Ultimate Outcome

- Improved child and family functioning

### Direct Services

- Easier and quicker access to care
- Earlier identification of concerns
- Improved child and youth functioning

### Direct Family Support

- More informed and self-advocating caregivers and youth in the service system
- Improved family functioning
- More satisfied children, youth, and families in the system of care

### System Infrastructure

- Family and youth are involved throughout system, reflecting community's various cultures
- Increased community awareness of SOC
- Maintain stable living arrangements for children and youth
- More cost-effective system of care
- Sustained system of care with strong infrastructure
- Improved project efficiency through real-time access to on-site data