



What is Systems of Care?

The goal of System of Care is to help families help their children succeed at home, in school and in the community. In Nebraska and nation-wide, System of Care is considered the best way of planning, developing and delivering services to children and their families. Because children are not little adults, their services must be planned and delivered in ways that fully involve their families, peer groups, neighborhoods, schools and community. This is especially important for children who have serious challenges related to their behaviors, health, school performance and safety at home, in their schools, and in the community. System of Care is fundamentally changing the relationships families have to the service system at every level. Collaboration and partnership between families and service providers is the thread that links successful programs, policies and practices. Many federal and state policies mandate parent involvement. Parents now provide services (like Family Peer Support with your local Family Organization), act as advocates for change, mentor other families, shape programs, create policies and carry out public service agendas. Parents and professionals working collaboratively as partners are now recognized as a best practice. These collaborative partnerships have resulted in measurable and direct positive benefits for families, children and providers.

What is a System of Care (SOC)?

The purpose of a System of Care is to make comprehensive, flexible and effective support available for children, youth and families throughout the community and through this assistance make the community a better place to live (Franz, John).



System of Care Framework

System of care Framework (From Stroul, B. & Friedman, R. (1986 rev ed)

Families and youth work in partnership with public and private organizations so services and supports are effective, build on the strengths of individuals, and address each person's cultural and linguistic needs.



INVOLVEMENT

Family Involvement in systems planning makes a difference in how the services are coordinated and offered in Nebraska!

The Role of Families in SOC

Families are at the center of the System of Care. They should expect to be partners in the local Community Collaborative with agencies, schools, and others in the Community. They should also expect to have a strong voice on their Child and Family Team, planning and making decisions about their child's services and supports. Families inform Child and Family Team members about their strengths and values, and they advocate for their children and themselves. Families help inform Community Collaboratives about what services and supports are needed in their community in order to help children and families succeed.

Why is it Important for families to get involved in their systems of care?

- ◆ Provides opportunity to effect meaningful change
- ◆ Feels good to make a contribution
- ◆ Increase confidence in ability to effect change
- ◆ Makes providers accountable to families
- ◆ Provides opportunities to network with other families and providers
- ◆ Builds knowledge and skills
- ◆ Models community involvement and empowerment for own children and family
- ◆ Creates less passive recipients of care and services
- ◆ Makes things better for other families
- ◆ Opens doors to employment
- ◆ Creates a sense of belonging
- ◆ Offers a sense of accomplishment
- ◆ Increases sense of person power
- ◆ Offers leadership role models for other families
- ◆ Decreases the isolation that so many families face when their children are having difficulties



Why is Parent Leadership Needed?

Parents and other caregivers are powerful advocates. By educating other leaders and decision makers about the needs of children and families, parents can help shape program policies and effect changes in the systems with which they interface. Parent leadership is a common-sense approach for ensuring that families get the resources they need to raise healthy children and protect their well-being. It is driven by the principle that the democratic involvement of parents is integral to better outcomes for families and communities.

Family-Driven Care

Family-driven means families have a primary decision making role in the care of their own children as well as the policies and procedures governing care for all children in their community, State, tribe, territory and nation. This includes:

- choosing supports, services, and providers;
- setting goals;
- designing and implementing programs;
- monitoring outcomes; and
- determining the effectiveness of all efforts to promote the mental health of children and youth.

Systems of Care Are:

- ◆ Family driven and youth guided, with the strengths and needs of the child and family determining the types and mix of services and supports provided.
- ◆ Community based, with the locus of services as well as system management resting within a supportive, adaptive infrastructure of structures, processes, and relationships at the community level.
- ◆ Culturally and linguistically competent, with agencies, programs, and services that reflect the cultural, racial, ethnic, and linguistic differences of the populations they serve to facilitate access to and utilization of appropriate services and supports and to eliminate disparities in care.



Youth-Guided Care

Youth-Guided means that youth are engaged as equal partners in creating systems change in policies and procedures at the individual, community, State and national levels. Applicants are required to develop plans for infusing a youth-guided approach throughout the system of care, including plans for training and supporting youth in positions of leadership and system transformation.

Understanding Advocacy

What you should know, as a Parent, when sharing
your voice

TIPS



Family Run Organizations were created by families, for families. Employees and volunteers of the organizations are family members who understand the challenges and mentor other families experiencing some of these same struggles they themselves have faced. Recognizing that parents and caregivers and youth are the experts when it comes to their families needs, the Family Organizations create a network of advocacy, support, education, and resource referral designed to strengthen families and empower them as they become stronger advocates for their children.

Nebraska has:

- 6 Behavioral Health Regions and 5 Service Areas, each with at least one Family Organization.
- Each Family Organization is an independent 501c3 non-profit.



Why Include Families?

- ◆ Families define themselves and their own culture
- ◆ Families require culturally competent services and supports reflecting their race, ethnicity, gender orientation, language, soci-economic background, and family structure
- ◆ Families have their basic needs met
- ◆ Families have access to information and training
- ◆ Families identify priorities and concerns drive policy and practice
- ◆ Families share power to make decisions and responsibility for outcomes
- ◆ Families and their system partner know their individual strengths, limitations, and fears
- ◆ Families have their own independent organization to speak with a collective voice for system change
- ◆ Families and their organizations get both respect and protection from their system partner.

Understanding Yourself to Lead Others

Before you can influence others, you must understand. Before you can lead others, you must know yourself. Before you can persuade, you must understand others.

We all differ from one another and we are not likely to make others change. Understanding why they make decisions like they do, or how they need to receive information can help us be better communicators and better leaders. We have very defined personality patterns. When we learn to identify our pattern and learn to recognize these patterns in others, we can enrich our sense of who we are, of who others are, and of how much can learn from each other.

- ◆ Remember that the more ways we have of looking at a problem or an issue, the better results we can come up with! My strength may be your weakness, and your strength may be my weakness. We all have areas of strength and areas that we struggle in. Understanding and respecting those areas can bring us great group strength.
- ◆ This is a quick version of a personality and communication style inventory. There are a few important things to remember.
- ◆ No one “style” is better than another.
- ◆ Our “style” is only the one we most prefer to “be in” most of the time. EACH ONE of us is composed of ALL these styles. This is like having a four-room house. One of the rooms is the one we spend the most time in, but all of them belong to us. We just use one more than the others and are more comfortable in “our” room.



ADVOCACY

Parents are Advocates within Systems of

As a parent or a youth in Nebraska, you are a valuable voice to system partners. Learn about your communication style so you can adequately share your voice about your experiences with others.

Family advocates also speak on behalf of issues and concerns that professionals may not be able to voice regarding changes in the service system policies, practices, and funding. Family members contribute integrity to policy group work by providing reality-based, culturally-relevant information from a perspective that no one else has. In Nebraska families are required members of Community Collaborative, the local decision-making bodies involved in systems of care and Consumer and Family Advisory Com-



1) Do your homework

Before approaching any criminal justice or mental health officials, advocates should learn as much as possible. For example, an advocate interested in enhancing law enforcement training on mental illness should know exactly what training is being provided right now, how often, and by whom. General information is helpful, but it is no substitute for information specific to an advocate's city, county, or state.

3) Listen

The best advocates are able to raise concerns while at the same time understanding the priorities and predicaments of officials they work with. They can hear what policy proposals will be viable, and which will be nonstarters.

5) Respect your Partners

The majority of criminal justice and mental health officials are committed professionals doing the best they can to serve their clients and communities. Advocates can acknowledge this by understanding the protocols and procedures of different agencies, and the budgetary, political, and administrative limitations within which they work. Respect does not mean compromising one's principles; it means appreciating that potential partners have their own principles as well.

7) Capitalize on Self-Interest

The most successful advocates recognize that criminal justice and mental health officials have numerous competing priorities. While the vast majority will agree that reversing the overrepresentation of people with mental illness in the criminal justice system is the "right thing to do," that is usually not enough. Convincing them to put energy towards this problem requires making clear what they stand to gain. Their reasons will vary, but advocates should always strive to understand the needs of their partners, and work to meet them.

2) Find a Champion

Systems change often hinges on whether advocates can identify a key official to take a leading role on criminal justice and mental health issues. This might be a corrections commissioner committed to improving reentry procedures, a judge whose son or daughter has a mental illness, or a high ranking police officer that has long fought for better mental health training. Among other virtues, these champions can remove institutional barriers that might otherwise stymie advocates.

4) Don't Reinvent the Wheel

The experience of the hundreds of community organizations across the country working to improve their responses to people with mental illness in the criminal justice system is an invaluable resource for advocates. Most new programs and policies are adaptations of strategies being employed elsewhere, and advocates should do their best to capitalize on the successes and failures of those in other jurisdictions.

6) Offer Support

Even while they are raising concerns, advocates should also offer support—to find out information, to convene meetings, to provide services—in short, to become a partner in change. In most cases, approaching criminal justice and mental health officials with

8) Be Specific

Many criminal justice and mental health officials are well aware of the overrepresentation of people with mental illness in the criminal justice system; they confront the problem every day. Advocates must avoid the pitfall of simply demanding change; if the problem were an easy one to solve, it wouldn't be a problem. The more specific the problems (and potential solutions) highlighted by advocates, the more criminal justice and mental health officials will be able to address them.



9) Set Realistic Goals

Systems are like people: they don't change overnight. Advocates should focus their efforts on specific issues and work to achieve measurable successes. Over time, these small victories can add up to long term systemic change.



10) Find Allies

Advocates should seek allies everywhere they can. Someone connected to the advocacy organization may have an in at the local correctional facility; business owners are often interested in improving community safety and reducing public nuisance crimes, and may be supportive of advocacy goals. Some advocates have found it easier to engage mental health service providers when accompanied by representatives of law enforcement or the courts. Many unlikely partners are attracted to efforts to address problems raised by the contact of people with mental illness with the criminal justice system. Strength, in advocacy, truly does come in numbers.

Telling your family's story as it relates to systems can be very impactful!

Telling your Story

Nervousness, speech anxiety, stage fright, platform panic - it's known by many names, but it's a problem every speaker must confront. Actually, feeling nervous before a speech is healthy. It shows that your issue is important to you and that you care about doing well. But, unless you can manage and control your nervousness, it can keep you from becoming an effective speaker. Here's how you can make your "butterflies" fly in formation: Recognize you're not alone and realize that people want you to succeed!

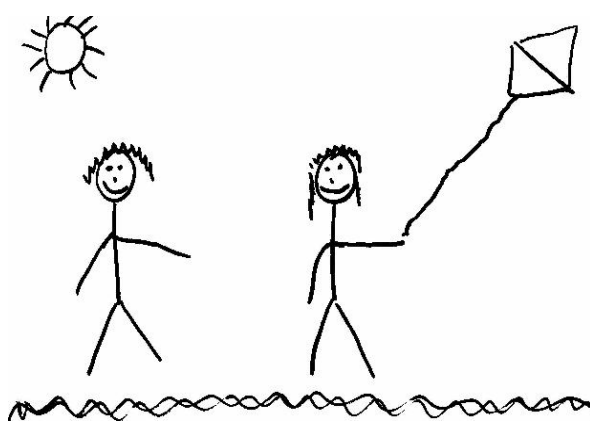
- 1) Speak about what you know. Select speech topics that are within the realm of your knowledge and experience. This will build your confidence and make you less nervous.
- 2) Prepare thoroughly. If you are well prepared and have rehearsed your speech you will have more confidence and less anxiety.
- 3) Concentrate on the message - not the medium. Focus your energy and attention on your message and your audience and away from your nervousness
- 4) Turn nervousness into positive energy. The same nervous energy that causes platform panic can be an asset to you. Harness it, and transform it into vitality and enthusiasm.
- 5) Gaining experience builds confidence.



What to Expect From Systems of Care Involvement in Nebraska

KICK OFF EVENT:

October 29th will be the Nebraska SOC Kick-Off in Lincoln. This event will bring together hundreds of parents, young people, state leaders, providers and policy makers with a common goal of creating teams that will begin to identify barriers and create plans to overcome those barriers in Nebraska. There will be 10 Core Strategy Teams. You will be asked to choose one which you feel you could contribute to through your experience with your family and involvement with systems. The teams include:



- 1) Policy, Administrative and Regulatory
- 2) Trauma Informed Care
- 3) Services and Supports
- 4) Financing Strategies
- 5) Workforce Development
- 6) Social Marketing and Communication
- 7) Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services
- 8) High Fidelity Wrap Around
- 9) Prevention

We will meet in the Hawthorne Room (basement) at the Cornhusker in Lincoln at 8:00am on October 29th for a brief Family Coordination Meeting prior to the conference.

You will work with your local Family Organization on specific details related to getting to the conference. This may include working together to determine transportation and meals. For individuals residing outside of Lincoln, reservations have been made at the Microtel Inn and Suites on 27th Street in Lincoln.

Your role at this conference is to share your voice, when appropriate. You are never expected to share personal information about your family that might damage one of you. Sharing your voice sometimes means that you gently relay your personal experience. An example might be, "In my family's experience, it took 4 months of being on a waiting list to access X service".

The morning will be a series of presentations explaining SOC and next steps. Lunch will be provided and after lunch participants will be asked to break into the subgroups (above) to begin creating some plans for longer term involvement. Your voice is VERY important in these sub-groups!





What to Expect From Systems of Care Involvement in Nebraska

Core Strategy Team Involvement

After being involved in one of the 10 subgroups at the Kick-Off, you will be provided opportunity for longer term involvement. Most of those meetings should be more local or be available to attend via conference call or webinar.

It is important for you to vocalize to your team about other commitments you have and to let them know what works best for future meeting dates. If that means that you can only meet evenings or weekends, you should share this. If it means over lunch via conference call, you should also share that! The team should accommodate families and their schedules!

Coordinating with Schools and Work

Your child’s school and/or your work should never be jeopardized to participate in these meetings.

If it is needed, we have provided a form letter that you can use to excuse your child from school. If you are in need of something similar for your employer, let your Family Organization representative know. Again, use your best judgment about absences from work or school as those are priority and should not be jeopardized.



Your Local Family Organization

Your local Family Organization is there to help you in a number of ways. With the SOC planning, they can assist you with coordinating travel and related expenses, as well as help you with information and updates and brainstorming, if desired.

Your Family Organization provides peer services and supports to parents of children with behavioral health challenges and parents that work with the child welfare systems. All the staff at the Family Organizations are Family Members, meaning, they are also parents that have experienced systems with their children! Partnership with your Family Organization can be very helpful. Ask them about support groups, services, resources, and how you can coordinate the Systems of Care project.



Remember– YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

