

COORDINATED CARE SERVICES, INC.
The Work We Do...

Assessing Oswego County's Children's Systems and Creating Responses to Identified Needs

THE OPPORTUNITY:

In early 2002, CCSI completed a comprehensive assessment of the Oswego County Mental Health System. A key finding from this assessment indicated that access to children's mental health services and availability of intensive service options were problems in Oswego County. Further, the efforts of the children's mental health system were not well integrated with other child-serving systems within the County. As a result, CCSI was engaged to provide an intensive assessment of the children's services offerings across the Mental Health, Social Service and Juvenile Justice systems and identify opportunities for enhancement and improved collaboration.

APPROACH TAKEN BY CCSI:

CCSI staff created a comprehensive needs assessment framework to engage all stakeholders from the three children's systems and explore current practices and opportunities for growth and development. The strategy incorporated:

- Individual interviews with stakeholders from the mental health, social service and juvenile justice systems;
- Focus groups;
- Observations of local processes and practices; and
- Review of data from the various systems regarding service array and utilization.

Results from this process were integrated into a comprehensive report that identified specific areas in which to streamline processes, improve efficiency and ultimately more adequately address the needs of children and families in Oswego County.

RESULTS OF CCSI'S WORK:

From this report, Oswego County was able to identify several key areas to focus on to reduce system and service duplication, improve the array of service options for children and families and enhance communication between the child-serving systems.

A key finding of the Children's System assessment was that Oswego County lacked alternatives to residential care for children and youth who were experiencing serious emotional and behavioral challenges or were involved with the multiple systems. As a result, the County was utilizing high cost out-of-home

placement options including for children and youth who would be more appropriately served within their home environments. Based on this finding, Oswego County engaged CCSI to support the planning, development and implementation of an alternative to residential care model that utilized the principles of wraparound and care coordination to more appropriately identify and respond to family's needs in a less restrictive and costly environment.

CCSI worked in collaboration with the County leadership to develop a credible model for Oswego County. This process included extensive data review of the cohort of children currently placed out of home in the previous year, a thorough review of the current complement of services, modeling of various staffing configurations based on the locality's structure and the creation of various financial models to demonstrate potential cost savings.

Using this information as a foundation, CCSI supported Oswego County in:

- Selecting an appropriate alternative care model;
- Creating all clinical processes and practices for the new initiative;
- Developing and issuing a Request for Proposals;
- Training all staff in the wraparound and care coordination process; and
- Selecting an information system that would capture relevant information and support the approach.

In late 2003, Oswego County launched the Youth and Families Come First (YFCF) program which supports high needs youth and families utilizing a wraparound approach to care which maximizes the use of natural supports and community-based services and reduces the need for out of home placement.

CCSI has also supported Oswego County with its attempts to integrate the functions of two case-planning forums that serve the County's highest risk and highest need children and families in an attempt to maximize efficiency and assure that all needs are identified and responded to in the most appropriate manner.

VALUE PROVIDED TO THE CUSTOMER:

CCSI is currently engaged in planning with County leadership for the formal evaluation of the YFCF's first full year of operations. According to a preliminary review of the data, 75% of enrollees avoided congregate care placements in 2004 resulting in cost savings for Oswego County. Additionally, Oswego County has reported that the training the staff received in family engagement and care coordination, which is consistent with the national system of care principles, has been invaluable in working with Oswego County's most at-risk children and families.