Evaluating the Partnership of Child Welfare and Mental Health Systems in Florida

Background
The Child Welfare Prepaid Mental Health Plan (CW-PMHP) is a partnership implemented in 2007 between a health maintenance organization and child welfare agencies to provide Medicaid-funded mental health services to children in Florida’s child welfare system. The Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) contracted with the Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida to evaluate the CW-PMHP.

CW-PMHP
Organizational Structure

Evaluation Methodology
- Currently in Year 3 of a multi-year evaluation. Includes diverse geographic areas of the state in terms of child welfare system structure, level of funding, number of children involved in local child welfare system, and rural versus urban areas.
- Discussions with AHCA each year to include their input and intended focus of the evaluation. Child welfare lead agencies given the opportunity to add questions to the mail survey.

Implementation Analysis
- Domains of study — implementation, roles and relationships, organizational structure, communication, financial structure and funding strategies, management information systems, service delivery, and outcomes.
- Semi-structured interviews with state, middle, and local level stakeholders from AHCA, the Florida Department of Children and Families, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Corporation, Magellan (managed care organization), child welfare lead agencies, and mental health service provider agencies. Year 1 and 2 activities designed to capture early experiences of stakeholders in the development and operation of the CW-PMHP. Year 3 focused on operations.

Quality of Care Analysis
- Population-based, five-wave mail survey sent to foster parents each year. Year 1 and 2 domains of study — access, information needs, case managers/mental health providers, quality of care, coordination of care, cultural competency, and financing. Year 3, mail survey content organized to comport with the Quality of Care Framework utilized for qualitative interview component.
- Beginning in Year 2 semi-structured interviews with service providers and parents, and focus groups with dependency case managers. Domains included – access, consumer engagement, appropriateness, and outcomes.

Evaluation Findings
Implementation Analysis
- Transition to managed care on track.
- Start-up difficulties are dissipating.
- Larger provider advantage.
- Stakeholder understanding of roles dependent on involvement in planning.
- Major service system reform takes time to implement and to see an impact at the service delivery level. Conducting a multi-year evaluation allows for a pre-implementation baseline to be established, a participatory approach to be developed with stakeholders, and recommendations for midcourse corrections to be offered.

Quality of Care Analysis
- Need for improved services and increased choice.
- Expedited assessment of service need.
- Improve appropriateness of MCO service authorizations.
- Adequate service array, expanded specialized services needed.
- Importance of family engagement.
- Foster parents not aware of new plan.
- Interagency communication should increase between child welfare and mental health.

Future Efforts
- Include parents involved in in-home judicial cases.
- Revisit geographic areas to inquire about changes/improvements.
- Possible statewide survey.

Purpose of Evaluation
- Assess the current status of implementation of the CW-PMHP and obtain an understanding of the structural and organizational features of the plan.
- Determine the extent to which the mental health service needs of children in Florida’s child welfare system are met by the CW-PMHP.
- Provide quantitative and qualitative examination of the experiences of parents, service providers, and dependency case managers involved with the CW-PMHP.

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