

Module 1

System of Care 101

What is System of Care?

System of care is an organizational philosophy and framework that involves collaboration across agencies, families, and youth for the purpose of improving services for children and youth with serious mental health issues. A system of care promotes agencies and families working together to improve outcomes for the child and family. It is not a specific service; it is a different way of doing business.

System of Care: A spectrum of effective, community-based services and supports for children and youth with or at risk for mental health or other challenges and their families, that is organized into a coordinated network, builds meaningful partnerships with families and youth, and addresses their cultural and linguistic needs, in order to help them to function better at home, in school, in the community, and throughout life.

System of Care's origins on a national level

In the mid-1980s, the concept of a "system of care" was introduced to address the many well-documented problems in services for children, youth, and young adults with mental health challenges and their families (Stroul & Friedman, 1996). Many children in need were not getting adequate mental health services or were served in excessively restrictive settings, and agencies rarely coordinated their services. Additionally, families were often viewed as part of the child's problem, rather than as part of the child's solution. The federal Child and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP) was initiated in 1984 to help states and communities begin to plan for and implement a child-centered, family-focused, culturally competent continuum of community-based care. That initiative provided the foundation for what became the system of care approach. A set of core values and guiding principles was established for systems of care and communities, and states across the country began to actively implement systems of care for the children and families they served.

For more information on the origins of the System of Care, see

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Beth_Stroul/publication/242511866_Systems_of_Care_A_Framework_for_System_Reform_in_Children's_Mental_Health/links/543fea0c0cf2fd72f99dc6c2/Systems-of-Care-A-Framework-for-System-Reform-in-Childrens-Mental-Health.pdf

Where it began in the State of Texas:

In 1987, the 70th Texas Legislature passed legislation directing child-serving state agencies, with input from private sector and advocacy/consumer groups, to develop a community-based approach to coordinate service planning for children and youth who needed multi-agency services. With the passage of that legislation, Texas began statewide efforts to initiate Community Resource Coordination Groups (CRCGs) to coordinate services for individual children and youth with multi-agency needs. The first four Community Resource Coordination Groups were launched in Henderson, Tarrant, Travis, and Val Verde

counties in 1988. Approximately eight years later, local CRGs were available to serve children and youth in all 254 counties in Texas.

The next two legislative sessions continued to boast improvements in children’s mental health services, with \$1.75 million designated for an interagency children’s mental health pilot programming focused on home-based services consistent with the CASSP model. Most notably, in 1991 the 72nd Legislature appropriated \$22.186 million for the Texas Children’s Mental Health Plan, used to initiate locally provided CASSP-based services for children with mental health needs and their families. By the late 1990s, children’s mental health services were available for youth in every county of Texas.

In 1997, the 75th Texas Legislature directed the state’s mental health authority, Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation (TDMHMR), to conduct a pilot to study the effectiveness of intensive community-based services options for children and families in decreasing the use of and or length of stay in residential treatment. Through a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and TDMHMR provided seed funding to Austin/Travis County and Brownwood/Brown County, the first two sites of the Texas Integrated Funding Initiative (TIFI). In addition, other communities began receiving technical assistance and support. In the following years, TIFI expansion sites were supported by funds from each of the participating agencies. These initial TIFI sites demonstrated a system of care approach with an integrated funding base to serve children with serious emotional disturbances.

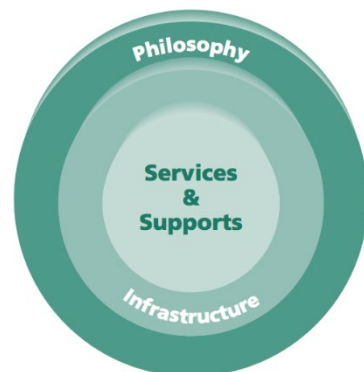
As each of these sites began to develop local expertise in serving children and adolescents with mental health needs, they became excellent candidates to successfully apply for federal SAMHSA grants to help them develop the infrastructure to provide comprehensive care to children with mental health needs. Since 2005, SAMHSA has awarded funding to several sites in Texas, including Travis County, Tarrant County, El Paso, Harris County, Bexar County, the 32-county Rural Children’s Initiative in north Texas, and most recently, the Heart of Texas area in Waco.

To find current communities across the State of Texas who are in various stages of development in their system of care efforts, please see the **attached Appendix A** and the interactive [Texas System of Care map](#).

System of Care Structure

From an overarching perspective, the system of care approach is established on three interrelated components: philosophy, infrastructure, and services and supports. The philosophy of a system of care approach is based upon a set of core values and principles that in turn offer the foundation for service systems and the services provided.

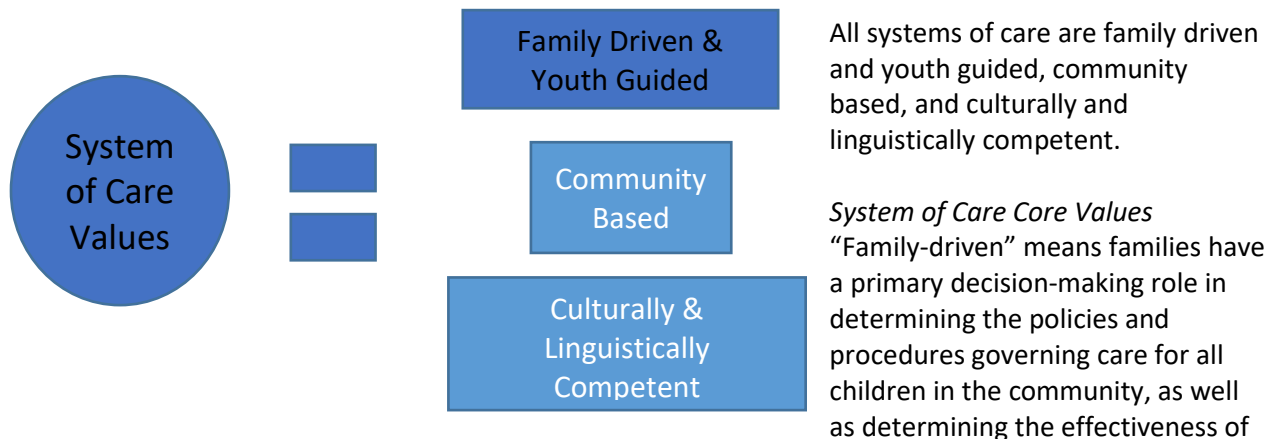
The infrastructure of a system of care includes governance structure and processes; financing for a wide range of services



and supports; formal and informal partnerships among child-serving agencies, providers, families, and youth; provider networks; and the system’s capacity for planning, evaluation, workforce development, and quality improvement.

The services and supports of a system of care include the specific interventions with children, youth, and families at the service delivery level that are consistent with the system of care values and principles (Stroul, 2002).

Although each community develops and implements system of care in different ways, each system of care is guided by the three core values.



all efforts to promote the mental health and well-being of children and youth. Having families and youth involved in all areas of planning, implementation and evaluation is a major part of the development of a system of care community. They should be involved from the beginning of the process. This means including multiple family voices which provide a variety of perspectives.

“Youth-guided” means establishing an environment where youth are safe to find their voices and develop their passions and use them to impact the system at every level. Additionally, a youth-guided system provides opportunities for youth to participate in program development and change and to actively participate in the planning when policies or decisions are being established that will affect their lives.

“Community-based” means that services, as well as the management and decision-making responsibility of those services rest at the community level. The needed services and informal supports should be available within the local community and driven by the child and family team.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE SYSTEM OF CARE

Children with emotional disturbances should have access to a comprehensive array of services that address their physical, social, and educational needs.

Children with emotional disturbances should receive individualized services in accordance with the unique needs and potentials of each child and guided by an individualized service plan.

Children with emotional disturbances should receive services within the least restrictive, most normative environment that is clinically appropriate.

The families and surrogate families of children with emotional disturbances should be full participants in all aspects of the planning and delivery of services.

Children with emotional disturbances should receive services that are integrated, with linkages between child-serving agencies and programs and mechanisms for planning, developing, and coordinating services.

Children with emotional disturbances should be provided with case management or similar mechanisms to ensure that multiple services are delivered in a coordinated and therapeutic manner and that they can move through the system of services in accordance with their changing needs.

Early identification and intervention for children with emotional disturbances should be promoted by the system of care in order to enhance the likelihood of positive outcomes.

Children with emotional disturbances should be ensured smooth transitions to the adult service system as they reach maturity.

The rights of children with emotional disturbances should be protected, and effective advocacy efforts for children and adolescents with emotional disturbances should be promoted.

Children with emotional disturbances should receive services without regard to race, religion, national origin, sex, physical disability, or other characteristics, and services should be sensitive and responsive to cultural differences and special needs.

Cultural and linguistic competency (CLC) focuses on creating an environment that promotes health equity and increases access for youth and families. CLC works towards ensuring that a person's cultural beliefs are acknowledged and respected when receiving services regardless of age, sexual identity, language, poverty, race, body size, ability or religion. The goal of CLC is to create an environment that is supportive and inclusive of all people seeking services.

Ten **guiding principles** were also established to lend consistent expectations across all systems of care. Because of the inherent flexibility of systems of care to meet the unique and evolving needs of their communities, the guiding principles help provide ongoing structure for systems of care design, programming, and implementation.

It is important to keep in mind that system of care is not a "new program," but rather a coordinated network of services across different agencies within a community. It is a philosophy that encourages and drives system change and at the same time can be flexible and creative to meet children, youth, and their families' needs at the local level.

For more information on system of care, see https://gucchd.georgetown.edu/products/Toolkit_SOC.pdf and the Texas System of Care website at www.txsystemofcare.org.

Next Steps

The next modules of the System of Care Community Toolkit will provide specific information about each of these components. Module 3 will provide basic information about Systems of Care governance structures. Modules 4, 5, and 6 describe methods of engaging youth, families, and communities to advance efforts to fully implement a system of care. Modules 7, 8, 9, and 10 address planning, communicating, evaluating, and financing systems of care. Modules 11 and 12 discuss cultural and linguistic competency and choosing the evidence-based behavioral health services and supports for your community.

Tools for System of Care 101			
Name of Tool	Purpose	Most Appropriate for:	Where to find it:
Introduction to System of Care Expansion	This document provides more in-depth information on the history, philosophy, and values of system of care. It could be used to help those who need more information to have a better understanding of system of care.	Community champions who would like to read more information on system of care.	https://gucchd.georgetown.edu/products/Toolkit_SOC.pdf
System of Care Cartoon	For visual learners, this is a great and fun way to explain system of care. The cartoon is no longer than 2 minutes and is available in both English and Spanish.	Community champions who are wanting to learn more about system of care. Great tool for explaining SOC to stakeholders.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ey29fy-VPOU
System of Care 101 Webinar	The System of Care 101 webinar is an hour and a half recording that provides an overview of the core values and key components of System of Care from the theoretical, practitioner, community, and family points of view.	Community leaders who will be facilitating SOC discussions with stakeholders from multiple perspectives.	http://www.txsystemofcare.org/webinars/system-of-care-101-webinar/
What is System of Care? (flyer)	This is a great one-page tool that can help remind community champions of the values of system of care. This tool can help strengthen your groups' elevator speech on system of care.	Core leadership group and community members at large.	http://www.txsystemofcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Texas-System-of-Care.pdf
Texas System of Care Overview Flyer	This is a one-page document that provides information on children's mental health in Texas, results of system of care, and system of care here in Texas.	Core leadership group and community members at large.	http://www.txsystemofcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Texas-System-of-Care.pdf
Strategies for Expanding the System	This document summarizes findings from a study on effective strategies for expanding the system of care	All community leaders for SOC.	https://gucchdtacenter.georgetown.edu/publications/SOC%20ExpansionStrategies%20Issue%2

of Care
Approach
(Issue Brief)

approach.

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Appendix A

System of Care Communities in Texas

Below please find other communities across the great State of Texas who are in various stages of development in their system of care efforts. Although each community develops and implements system of care in different ways, all of their work is guided by the three values.

Name of SOC	Year Originated	Area Served	Summary
<i>The Children's Partnership</i>	1998	Travis County	Works with children and youth between the ages of 5 and 17 who are involved in multiple systems and their families by using the wraparound process.
Community Solutions	2002	City of Fort Worth	Focused on creating an accessible, culturally competent and seamless child and family-driven system of care for families impacted by severe emotional disturbances in Fort Worth.
Mental Health Support Services	2002	El Paso County	The main point of contact and guide to wrapping a family with as many community based services as are appropriate and needed.
Systems of Hope	2005	Harris County	Committed to restoring hope to the families they serve and working closely with youth and their families to provide advocacy and coordination of services to achieve total empowerment for the youth and family in the community.
Mental Health Connection Hand In Hand	2008	Tarrant, Palo Pinto, Parker, Hood, & Johnson Counties	Designed to develop a system that will support healthy behavioral and emotional development for children from

			birth through age 6.
Rural Children’s Initiative	2008	Lamb, Floyd, Hale, Briscoe, Motley, Dickens, Bailey, Palmer, Castro, Swisher, and Crosby Counties	Families and youth work in partnership with public and private organizations to design mental health services and supports that are effective, that build on the strengths of individuals, and that address each person’s cultural and linguistic needs.
*Tropical Texas Behavioral Health	2013	Hidalgo, Willacy, and Cameron Counties	Is in the developmental stages and working to incorporate the values and principles of system of care so they can provide a more coordinate approach to serving youth and families.
*Bexar CARES	2014	City of San Antonio	Increasing the communities understanding of the system of care values and principles and working towards improving and addressing young children and their families’ mental health concerns.
Paving the Way	2014	Erath, Hood, Johnson, Palo Pinto, Parker, Somervell, and Tarrant Counties	Helps youth in transition pave the way in education, housing, career, wellbeing, and community involvement.
*Midland County System of Care	2014	Midland County	Identified a community leadership team and are in the process of completing a needs assessment which will help to inform their strategic plan.
*Dallas County System of Care	2015	Dallas County	Educating the community on system of care values and principles and strengthening the community leadership team.
*Coastal Plains Community	2015	Aransas, Bee, Brooks,	Educating the community on

Center		Duval, Jim Wells, Kenedy, Kleberg, Live Oak, and San Patricio Counties.	system of care values and principles and strengthening the community leadership team.
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**Please note these communities are in the initial stages of system of care development. For more up to date information, please email info@txsystemofcare.org.*

Bibliography

Stroul, B., & Friedman, R. M. (1996). The system of care concept and philosophy. In B. Stroul (Ed.), *Children's mental health: Creating systems of care in a changing society*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company

Stroul, B. (2002). Issue Brief. *Systems of care: A Framework for System Reform in Children's Mental Health*. Washington, DC: National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health, Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development.