



# What is System of Care?

**S**ystem of Care is a framework for designing mental health services and supports for children and youth who have a serious emotional disturbance, and their families, through a collaboration across and involving public and private agencies, families and youth. It is a new way of doing business that brings together committed partnerships under one umbrella.

A System of Care connects and coordinates the work of State child-serving agencies, nonprofit and local governments, behavioral health care providers, families and patient advocates. It helps children, youth, and families function better at home, in school, in the community, and throughout life.

## Does Nebraska have a System of Care?

Not yet but a strategic plan for a System of Care has been completed and first steps are being taken to implement the plan.

In 2013-2014 over 1,000 families, youth, service providers and other stakeholders were involved in the development of the Strategic Plan. Movement forward capitalizes on partner commitment and work completed to date. The implementation process will result in a functional and well-planned System of Care that will improve service delivery systems, provide meaningful benefits and measurable, positive outcomes for children, youth and families.

## Why are states implementing Systems of Care?

Systems of Care have transformed children's mental health services and improved the lives of children, youth and their families. The approach has gained wide acceptance due to the recognition that children with serious and complex mental health needs are frequently involved with multiple child-serving agencies.

Positive outcomes for children and youth have been achieved through the increased use of home and community-based services and supports. States are coordinating the planning and delivery of services within a system of care infrastructure that addresses the unique strengths and needs of each child and family.

States and communities that have implemented the System of Care approach have reported changes, including:

- Increase in school attendance and school performance.
- Decrease in average age of first system contact.
- Decrease in cost per youth receiving services.
- Increase in percent of youth and young adults living in home settings.

## What do we want to achieve with a System of Care in Nebraska?

A statewide readiness assessment was conducted in 2013 among families, youth, service providers and other stakeholders. It identified priority areas:

- Ensuring access to an array of services and supports,
- Enhancing the cultural and linguistic appropriateness of services to match family needs,
- Coordinating and integrating service and support programs across child-serving agencies,
- Leveraging and maximizing use of all funding sources,
- Supporting trauma-informed service options,
- Ensuring family and youth involvement and leadership, and
- Monitoring quality and outcomes through a cross-agency approach.

## What are the next steps/timeline for System of Care in Nebraska?

A System of Care in Nebraska will be fully operational in three to five years. Through 2016, the following will be accomplished:

- Operationalize the strategies for system coordination across state, regional and local leadership teams and workgroups.
- Implement a phased work plan.
- Complete data baseline and a financial blueprint of existing funding and people served across child-serving agencies.
- Develop and implement a communication plan to educate partners, families and stakeholders.