

LGFCU Excellence in Innovation Award Project Evaluation

Project ID	HS-6
Title of Program	Expedited Mental Health Services Provision for Foster Children
Program Category	Human Services
Submission Date	5/5/2016 3:43:11 PM
County	CLEVELAND
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County Manager	JEFF RICHARDSON
Supervisor	KAREN ELLIS
Implementation Date	2/1/2015
FLSA Designation	Exempt
Project Team Members	KAREN ELLIS, DIRECTOR ALISON CLARK, PROGRAM MANAGER

Description of Productivity Improvement

Cleveland County had been experiencing a number of foster children that had extreme behavioral health issues and were not receiving appropriate mental health services. In addition, the children were being placed inappropriately because of the lack of appropriate mental health services. Consequently, our children were experiencing multiple placements, increased negative behaviors, school suspensions, and psychiatric hospitalizations. The productivity improvement plan was implemented by Cleveland County DSS Director, Karen D. Ellis and Alison Clark, Foster Care Program Manager to address the system's breakdowns and ensure that our foster children received timely appropriate mental health services. Also, we had to put a stop to spending unnecessary county dollars whenever there was a solution at the local level through Partner's Behavioral Health system. Partners, the local MCO were denying a number of requests for higher levels of placement to meet our foster children's therapeutic needs. Miss Clark met with Partner's staff and expressed her concerns as these children were threats to the community, adults, animals and other children. Mrs. Ellis went to the next level and carried her concerns to the CEO of Partners and stated something needed to happen before a child was injured or injured someone else. Ms. Ellis orchestrated a series of meetings to address the problems. Miss Clark provided case specific scenarios at each monthly meeting organized by Mrs. Ellis. Partner's staff was able to clearly identify the deficits in their service provision. Another issue that arose from these meeting was the fact that some children were placed with providers and since they did not have a current diagnosis or mental health level, the County had to inadvertently pay administrative fees out of the County budget. Miss Clark provided a list of clients

that met these criteria to Mrs. Ellis for their monthly meetings, along with documentation to support each situation. Mrs. Ellis requested that all foster children referred to Partner's should be flagged and fast tracked to save money and get the children the timely services that they needed and were entitled.

The CEO immediately agreed to work in concert with Mrs. Ellis and Ms. Clark to remedy the challenges we faced. In addition to providing monthly meetings with DSS Social Workers and Mental Health staff, they also identified specific MCO staff for Miss Clark to call in times of crisis or when denials were occurring. The children that were inappropriately placed that were utilizing county dollars became the focus of the MCO staff. They immediately researched the cases that Ms. Ellis and Ms. Clark identified and remedied the problem. Moreover, because of the successful community collaboration between Partner's MCO and Cleveland County DSS, there are no County dollars being expended on foster children who need therapeutic or residential services. DSS Director, Karen Ellis and Partner's CEO, Rhett Melton met on a regular basis to develop a solution to this challenge. Care Coordinators were assigned to specific DSS cases. Also, the MCO has hired a Mental Health Liaison to be housed two to three days per week to fast track DSS consumers who are in need of mental health services.

Description of why this project was initiated

Foster Children were not being served timely with appropriate mental health services. Consequently, thousands of county dollars were utilized because of the mental health system design. Social Workers had to work overtime to find placements for foster children who were in constant crisis. These particular foster children were decompensating and their therapeutic needs were unmet. Social Workers often were sitting at the DSS office with these children because services were unavailable to meet their needs. Our foster children were in immediate need of timely mental health assessments, care coordination, access to therapeutic mental health placements, and adequate medication management.

Quantifiable results (sustainability, cost savings, cost avoidance and/or a higher level of service).

Indication of what resources were used and what was done with any accrued time savings

When children are not leveled appropriately or timely by the MCO or are in placements that require administrative fees it costs the County \$10,000 for one month of care for one child. The working in concert approach to this solution prevented a \$50,000 county budget pitfall. Foster Children's needs are being met receiving timely and appropriate mental health services.

Other descriptive information

This initiative began in February of 2015 and took most of the year to establish and maintain. It required many hours of meetings, conference calls, information sharing, and delegation. We now are known at the state level for the excellent way we discovered a solution for foster children needed mental health services. We now have a grievance protocol for providers that are not meeting the MCO's expectations and our agency is proud that are foster children's needs are met so they can flourish.

