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Kane County Health Department Receives Funding to Improve Children's Mental Health

The Illinois Children's Healthcare Foundation (ILCHF) has awarded the Kane County Health Department an initial \$200,000 planning grant to improve the system of care for children and their families. Once the initial planning year is completed, Kane County will be eligible for an additional \$2.1 million over the following six years for implementation. This project will be a collaboration between the health department and many committed partner organizations and collaboratives working to serve the mental health needs of young people in Kane County.

In May of this year, community stakeholders reviewed health data for Kane County and again selected Behavioral Health as one of the top three health priorities in the new Kane County Community Health Improvement Plan. Community leaders voted mental health and substance abuse to be the most severe health issues facing our residents.

"We are fortunate in Kane County to have so many individuals and organizations doing tremendous work to address the behavioral health needs of our young residents," stated Michael Isaacson, MPH, Assistant Director for Community Health at the Kane County Health Department and Project Director for this initiative. "This funding and technical support from the Foundation will support efforts to coordinate and expand existing efforts to better meet the needs of our families."

The project will utilize a holistic approach and engage multiple, existing collaboratives made up of organizations representing early childhood, education, justice, local government, mental health, primary care, social services and substance abuse providers. The foundation of this project will be 1) coordinated screenings, 2) a single point of entry and 3) capacity building to increase wraparound services. These data driven efforts will emphasize measuring and evaluating quality and family satisfaction. The project seeks to meet the unique needs of all children, utilizing a "no wrong door" approach that facilitates a family's access into coordinated care, regardless of how they enter the system. Regular, coordinated review of the data by the partners and a strong commitment to continuous quality improvement will identify sub-populations whose needs are not being met. The major strength of this project is that multiple sectors are committing resources to seek upstream solutions together in an effort to reduce the burden on families. The intent is that there be ongoing communication and learning shared between this project, the ILCHF and the other ILCHF funded projects to improve how mental health services are provided not just in Kane County, but across the State of Illinois.

Collaboratives committed to this project include:

All Our Kids (AOK) Early Childhood Network- <http://kanehealth.com/aok.htm>

Kane County Behavioral Health Council- <https://www.wesupportmentalhealth.org/>

Kane County Juvenile Justice Council- <http://jjcouncil.countyofkane.org/>

Additionally, individual agencies that contributed to the successful funding application and have formally committed to participate on the Community Planning Team for this project include: Association for Individual Development; Family Counseling Services of Aurora; Family Service Association of Greater Elgin; Kane County Regional Office of Education; Renz Addiction Counseling Center; TriCity Family Services and VNA Health Care. Families will also participate on the Planning Team to provide the critical consumer perspective.

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