

## **Allegheny County's Title IV-E Waiver Experience**

The Title IV-E Waiver has enabled us to build a solid framework to invest in practices and innovative strategies to improve safety, permanency, and well-being for children and families in our child welfare system. Overall, this broad framework is built on the premise that when family engagement is central to case practice, and identifying consumer needs and strengths is a collaborative process, service planning becomes more effective and outcomes resulting from those services will be better. However, the best engagement, assessment, and planning can only go so far without high quality services available to meet the needs of individuals and families once they are connected to those services. This is why improving quality of care, building in mechanisms to evaluate service provision and outcomes, and ensuring that contracting and payment procedures align with these goals are integral parts of the demonstration process. Through this framework, we are committed to a 30 percent reduction in congregate care, re-entry and days in care over a five year period. The savings in placement costs are being used to fund the programming and system changes.

Specifically, Allegheny County is accomplishing this work by:

- Improving family engagement and service integration by implementing Conferencing and Teaming.
- Implementing common assessment tools to direct clients and families to appropriate services.
- Improving process and quality of care through the increased the use of evidence-based practices.
- Reforming contracting and payment procedures to align county and provider incentives.
- Utilizing strong quality improvement processes to continuously assess and evaluate services.
- Aligning programmatic monitoring with new practice models

The progress we've made so far provides a promising glimpse of what is possible when federal resources are used effectively. For example, in the first year, we reduced the number of children placed in out of home care by nine percent. Of the children placed in out of home care, over 50 percent are in a foster care setting with relatives (as of 1/1/15). We have trained over 300 caseworkers in a new practice model that improves how we engage, assess and connect families to appropriate and high-quality services.

Further, we are utilizing the waiver to expand the use of evidence based practices. In the past year, we've focused on procuring and preparing to implement HOMEBUILDERS®, an intensive family preservation program to replace our current crisis service. We are also building playrooms to conduct Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) in Family Support Centers across the county. A core tenant of PCIT is to provide treatment in a secure, non-stigmatizing environment. Family Support Centers are community-based and participant governed service entities that promote the stability and healthy growth of families by providing supports around

child development, parenting and goal planning. Resources are being devoted so that families in the child welfare system have access to Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT). In August 2014, twenty clinicians in Allegheny County began their yearlong training on TF-CBT which helps children, adolescents, and their caregivers overcome trauma-related difficulties. It is designed to reduce negative emotional and behavioral responses following child sexual abuse, domestic violence, traumatic loss, and other traumatic events. Finally, Allegheny County is using Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST), an evidence based practice designed to enhance parenting skills and provide intensive family therapy to troubled teens and delinquent teens.

Having stable and guaranteed funding for a five year period has enabled us to plan and operationalize with a greater level of certainty. Finally, if this was a permanent solution, we could stop doing eligibility determinations. In Allegheny County, this would free up approximately \$2 million a year in administrative costs that could be used for services.