

EVALUATION UPDATE

Awareness Day Turns Five: Caring for Every Child's Mental Health

March
2010

This year, National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day will celebrate five years of raising public awareness about children's mental health. This Evaluation Update includes articles to help you and your community use local and national system of care evaluation efforts to highlight the key message identified by SAMHSA for this year's Awareness Day: Positive mental health is essential to a child's healthy development from birth.

Every year on Children's Mental Health Awareness Day, communities across the country host activities to raise awareness of the mental health needs of local children and their families. For the next two years, Awareness Day will focus on the importance of positive mental health in early childhood. This year, Awareness Day is May 6. Our goal for Awareness Day is to increase public awareness of the mental health needs of children from birth to eight years old. In 2011, Awareness Day will highlight ways that systems of care communities successfully address those needs.

Parents, community members, providers, and policy makers all need to work together to provide young children with nurturing environments that help them to be healthy and thrive. When children experience mental health challenges at a young age, addressing these challenges *early* can help prevent more serious social, educational, and emotional struggles in later childhood and adolescence.



Helping Children Thrive in Their Communities



When community members understand the importance of positive mental health in early childhood, they can make a difference for children. Family members, child care providers, educators, and health care workers are all important in supporting the well-being of young children. This year, Awareness Day will address how we can promote healthy child development, as well as highlighting concerns that may stand in the way of achieving that important goal.

Many Awareness Day resources are available to help local communities spread the word about these needs. A colorful and informative Short Report will provide national data about early childhood mental health. The Short Report

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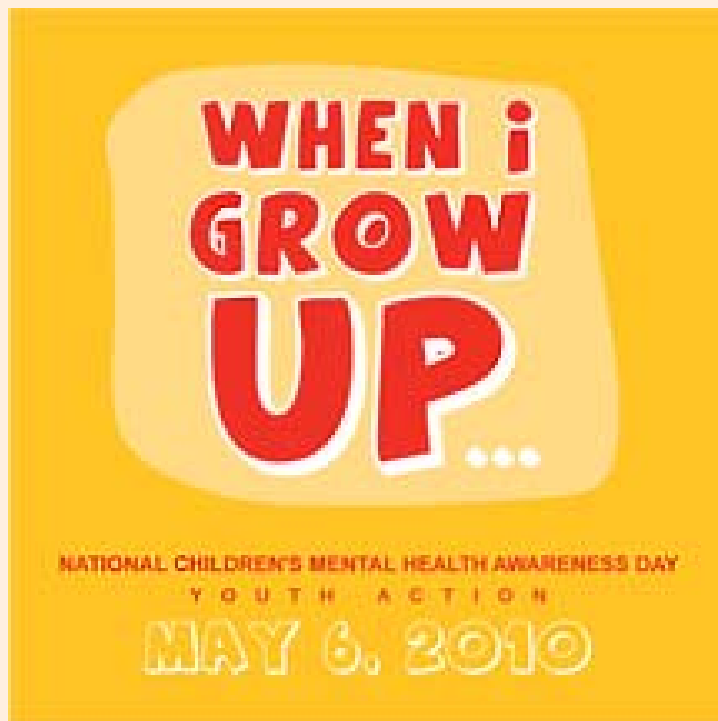
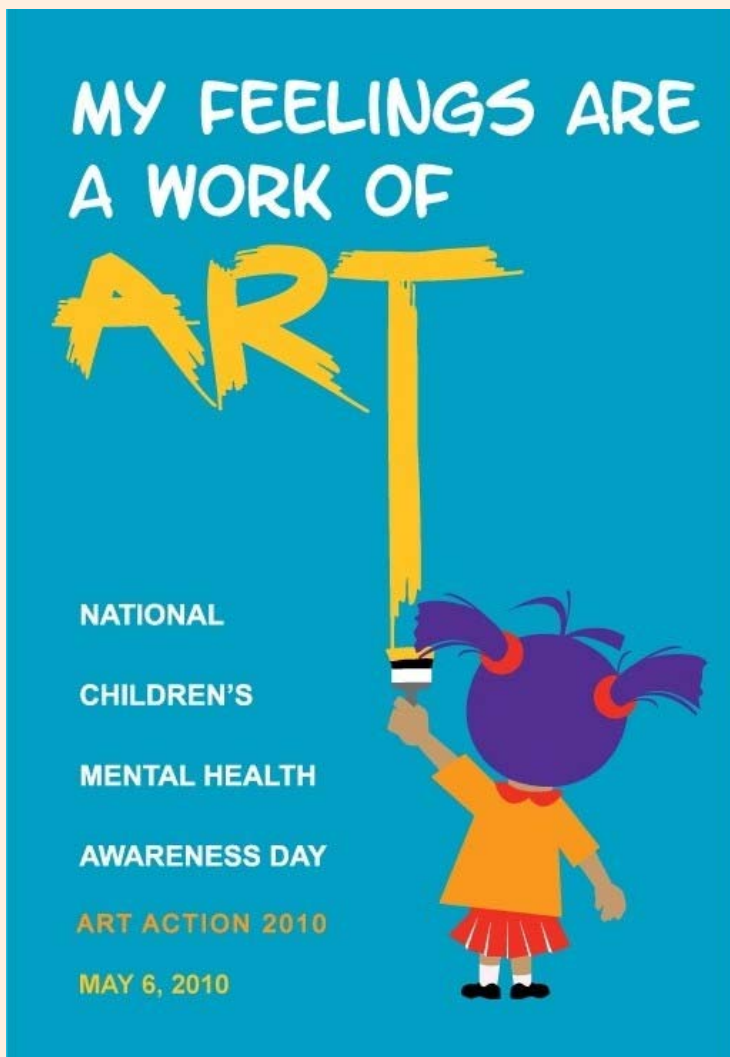
Helping Children Thrive in Their Communities (continued)

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for this year, entitled *Systems of Care: Addressing the Mental Health Needs of Young Children*, will provide findings on topics such as: who refers young children for services; and child and caregiver outcomes related to school attendance, emotional and behavioral health, and family strain.

Other available materials that promote children's mental health awareness include an e-viral campaign called *Post NOW*. *Post NOW* is a monthly message and image featuring facts on the current state of children's mental health. Participants may forward these electronic signs to e-mail distribution lists of people in the community who work with children, youth, and their families.

A second activity is the Awareness Day Art Action: *My Feelings are a Work of Art*. This activity engages caregivers in helping young children to express their feelings through the arts.



A third activity is a Youth Action called *When I Grow Up*. In this activity, on May 6, at the same time all across the country, youth will raise awareness about the mental health needs of children and youth by holding signs that show what they want to be when they grow up. The back of the signs will display information about children's mental health. The goal is to support the total well-being of children and youth, to help inspire hope for the future.

Other resources, such as Awareness Day graphics and planning materials, can be found on the SAMHSA Awareness Day Web site: <http://www.samhsa.gov/children>.

The following articles present ways that some system of care communities use local and national evaluation data. The articles give real and practical examples of how communities increased awareness and support for early childhood mental health among providers and other community members, even when the communities primarily serve older children. By taking ideas and inspiration from these communities, you can make May 6, 2010, the most successful Awareness Day yet!



TIP OF THE QUARTER!

Watch for the resources that will be available following Awareness Day:

- ⇒ The publication *Identifying Mental Health and Substance Use Problems of Children and Youth: A Guide for Child Serving Organizations*
- ⇒ A closed caption eight-minute video addressing early childhood

What Happens in Early Childhood Lasts a Lifetime

*Cathy Imburgia, Social Marketing Coordinator
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Delaware B.E.S.T.*

Delaware's system of care believes that data are good even when the results seem bad, because they can be used to drive positive change for children and families. Ranked fourth in the nation for

Upcoming Evaluation Activities

Remember to complete your requirements and contributions for the studies wrapping up this spring:

- ⇒ *Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)*
- ⇒ *Cultural and Linguistic Competency (CLC) second sub-study*
- ⇒ *Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) Implementation Factors sub-study*
- ⇒ *System of Care Assessment (SOCA)*
- ⇒ *Sustainability*

expulsion of children from public pre-schools, the state is using an early childhood grant from SAMHSA to fill a critical gap in the state's mental health system for children birth to five years old. Delaware's B.E.S.T. (Bringing Evidence-Based Sys-

tem-of-Care & Treatment) for Young Children and Their Families is reaching out to families, providers, pediatricians and the early childhood community to create awareness and build a statewide system of care for infants and young children and their families.

Before turning its attention to services for young children, Delaware Division of Child Mental Health Services (DCMHS) was getting the word out about children's mental health with a "sweet" approach. Every Awareness Day, each person visiting a Rita's Water Ice store received information about children's mental health, a free Water Ice, and a give-away ice cream scoop with contact information for DCMHS. More than 7,000 people were reached in this way, and more than half of the volunteers for the event were youth, many of them involved in the state's child welfare, juvenile justice, or mental health systems. The activity also engaged others in the community, including families, mental health providers, advocacy groups, media outlets, and schools.

For 2010, *Get the Scoop on Child Mental*

Health will emphasize services for very young children by reaching out to daycare centers, early childhood care agencies, and legislators. And, as an extension of the Awareness Day 2010 Youth Action



When I Grow Up, B.E.S.T. will provide job-related costumes (i.e., firemen's hats, scrubs, etc.) to daycare centers and pre-schools, so that young children can play dress-up, and show their communities what they want to be "when they grow up." All of these activities use national and local systems of care data, to help community members better understand what children need in early childhood to be successful later in life.

An Early Childhood Report Card

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Multnomah County Wraparound Oregon: Early Childhood*

The Multnomah County Wrap-around Oregon: Early Childhood (WOEC) evaluation team and social marketing committee work together to help their community be more aware of the strengths and needs of young children with emotional and behavioral challenges and their families. The evaluation team provides the numbers and the stories about the children served by WOEC to



the social marketing committee. The committee then uses this information to create the *WOEC Outcome Report*. This report is just one example of how this team approach can promote systems change.

The design and format for the *WOEC Outcome Report* was inspired by the "Report Card" of the Monterey County system of care in California. It both shares WOEC visions and goals and showcases successful child and family outcomes, in an attractive, "user-friendly" way. Information is included on: child and family experiences; family satisfaction with services; children's developmental, emotional and behavioral progress; and how well community partners are working together.

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An Early Childhood Report Card *(continued)*

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In the spirit of communities learning from each other, WOEC would like to share lessons they learned in developing their *Outcome Report*. They include:

- Use numbers and stories together, not just one or the other.
- Share family success stories (keeping confidentiality rules in mind), to show the real people behind the data.
- Don't be afraid to re-use data from other reports and presentations. (Be sure that your data from earlier sources are correct!)
- Increase community awareness of system of care principles, along with the statistics and stories.
- Provide materials in the languages spoken in your community.
- Use attractive colors, graphs, and photos to catch the reader's interest.
- Incorporate "facts at a glance," to give a community snapshot.
- Distribute it far and wide.
- Have fun!

Future Evaluation Updates

- ⇒ Practice-Based Evidence
- ⇒ Youth Perspectives on Evaluation Data

Rhode Island's Commitment to Provider Awareness

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Rhode Island Positive Educational Partnership (RIPEP)*

The Rhode Island Positive Educational Partnership (RIPEP) is committed to the health and well-being of children and youth from birth through 11 years of age and their families, particularly when they are faced with serious mental health challenges. RIPEP uses local and national evaluation data to build awareness and create change at three levels. They are: the **system level** (where policies are

made); the **"bridge" level** (the partners that make up RIPEP); and the **practice/program level** (where child, youth, and family outcomes are directly addressed). At all of these levels, RIPEP conveys two messages:

- 1) Children's mental health—particularly young children—should be considered a public health issue, rather than a medical problem; and
- 2) The community needs to know about the children, youth and families who participate in RIPEP, and the services and supports they need to be well.

Among the ways that RIPEP communicates these messages to service providers include:

System-Level Awareness Activities

- Use study findings to help the RIPEP governance body work on cultural and linguistic issues.
- Present local data to the statewide directors of special education and to the Rhode Island Special Education Advisory Committee, about the need to consider mental health as they work to secure better educational services for children.

- Conduct Awareness Day activities at the state capitol to raise legislator awareness about children's mental health, the need for prevention and early intervention, and the work of RIPEP. Family members, youth, service providers, and legislators that champion children's mental health issues, use evaluation findings during these activities.

Bridge-Level Awareness Activities

- Provide local data to RIPEP's early childhood subcommittee, to enhance their planning and programming efforts.
- Inform pediatricians about children's mental health and their role in screening and identification, as well as how they can become involved in RIPEP.
- Provide a shortened version of the Data Profile Report (DPR) to school staff, highlighting key findings related to school performance.

Practice-Level Awareness Activities

- Regularly share local and national evaluation data with partner agencies and providers so they know who is served by RIPEP, what services and supports children need, and what outcomes are being achieved.

