

## **Project Connect**

*The Illinois Department of Human Services/Division of Mental Health in collaboration with the youth, family, and child serving agencies in White, Saline, and Gallatin Counties will develop the proposed project. Project Connect is a System of Care for youth with serious emotional disturbances and their families. Project Connect's mission is to provide a seamless System of Care for the three rural, southeastern Illinois counties that is family-driven, youth-guided, strengths-based, sustainable, culturally and linguistically competent. The three counties have high poverty rates, low levels of adult education, high levels of disability, and high Medicaid enrollment. The area is substantially underserved for mental health, with only 10% of the children and youth with serious emotional disturbances receiving special education services; outpatient services are limited, resulting in 10% of youth with serious emotional disturbances being hospitalized each year. Project Connect serves all children, birth to age 21, in these counties, also targets three groups that are particularly in need of additional support: (1) Youth transitioning to adulthood (age 16-21), (2) youth receiving special education services, and (3) youth undergoing major developmental transitions (into grade school, into middle school, and into high school). Project Connect has expanded access to and speed entry into services by implementing universal screening of youth through the schools at three points in their K-12 education; Project Connect has expanded services by hiring Family Resource Developers and Care Managers to work in concert with school-based social workers and mental health service providers in the community; Project Connect has deepened services by offering evidence-based practices to support youth and family development (such as Wraparound services, parent skills training, and services focused on transitioning to adulthood); Project Connect has increased the quality of services by instituting individual care plans, training all mental health providers in best practices, and providing centralized psychiatric assessments; Project Connect continues to decrease the powerful stigma of mental health conditions by implementing a social marketing campaign which will be culturally appropriate to the three rural counties. Project Connect's goal is to serve at least 700 over the course of the federal funding.*

The Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health is requesting \$1.5 million from the United States Department of Health and Human Services for the 5<sup>th</sup> year of this project.

[www.projectconnectehd.org](http://www.projectconnectehd.org)

Brochures: [MichelleLeDuffFRDpage \(PDF\)](#)  
[SherrieFraileyFRDpage \(PDF\)](#)