



Children's Behavioral Health Transformation Initiative

MONTHLY PROGRESS

August 2022

OVERVIEW

Announced by Governor JB Pritzker in March 2022, the Initiative aims to improve the delivery of behavioral health services to children and adolescents with significant and complex challenges, as well as to streamline and simplify the ways in which families can access resources, services, and supports for the youth in their care. This work, which will culminate in a Blueprint for Transformation that will guide the state in improving the children's behavioral health service system in Illinois, is led by Dr. Dana Weiner, a clinical psychologist and child welfare expert with decades of experience in improving the functioning of public systems and increasing access to services for children and families.



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As we've examined our complex system of behavioral health resources and supports, we have identified many barriers to accessing services for Illinois children and families with significant and complex challenges. But strengths matter, too. Our process also has identified many assets in communities and in our system that we can build on and fortify to help achieve our goals. We are working across the six partner agencies (Illinois Departments of Human Services, Healthcare and Family Services, Children and Family Services, Juvenile Justice, Public Health, and the Illinois State Board of Education) to understand the challenges, and to develop a plan to address them in creative and innovative ways. This issue of our monthly Bulletin will focus on some of the system strengths on which we plan to build.

Did You Know...

1. [NAMI Chicago](#)'s hotline serves families in the City of Chicago and Cook County by linking them to service providers. The organization received more than 26,000 calls from 2018-2021.
2. The Illinois Department of Human Services' Division of Mental Health, with the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration launched [988, a new suicide prevention and mental health crisis line](#). People in mental health crisis or emotional distress can call or text 988 to reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or can seek treatment options for mental health conditions at [988hotline.illinois.gov](#) or call 1-800-662-HELP (4357).
3. The Illinois State Board of Education and the Center for Childhood Resilience at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, with the Illinois Department of Public Health, have expanded the Resilience Education to Advance Community Healing (REACH) Initiative statewide. The initiative, which included 52 schools in 2021, is anchored by [seven social-emotional learning hubs](#) that provide localized training and support for trauma-informed practices in schools.
4. [Easterseals](#) provides educational and support services for children with disabilities and the people who support them; between January and March 2022, staff provided 209 services including coaching, professional development, and student-specific consultations to school districts in Chicagoland and the Rockford area through their [Illinois Autism Partnership Program](#).
5. [The Illinois Youth and Family Alliance \(The Alliance\)](#) is a family run organization that provides peer support to caregivers of children with mental health needs. In addition, the Alliance provides educational programs and technical assistance to support parents in recognizing and addressing child and adolescent mental health concerns.



Coordination

The Interagency Crisis Staffing Workgroup, comprised of representatives from the six partner agencies, meets several times a week to address the urgent and emerging needs of young people seeking residential placements. Over the last month, this group has worked collaboratively to open new pathways to in-home supports for families caring for youth with complex needs, find placements for youth that leverage innovative funding arrangements and engage with legislators, judges, and local communities to raise awareness of the availability of existing resources, and to open new pathways to in-home supports for families caring for youth with complex needs. This work has highlighted the need for specific placement types, including transitional housing for youth leaving acute settings (such as psychiatric hospitals) and for youth transitioning to independence.

Best practices

Our best practice reviews have identified examples of approaches to organizing children's mental health services and improving access to these services, as well as specific approaches to supporting parents and providers. As we continue to weigh the feasibility and value of these approaches to identify the optimal set of strategies for improving the Illinois behavioral health service system, we look to systems in New Jersey, Nebraska, Alaska, Washington, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Arkansas. These states all provide examples of leveraging technological innovations, simplifying access, and managing capacity to deliver services all along the continuum of care.

Process Improvements

Our "small test of change" using the new Interagency Intake Portal has demonstrated the value of opening communication channels between and among state agency representatives to expedite placement and staffing for youth who need intensive mental health services. The Portal has made the interagency group accessible to hospital staff and other key partners, allowed us to centralize oversight and identify common challenges, and collected data that documents the nature and volume of need for high-end services. The pilot implementation of the Portal will help us enhance our ability to adjust capacity and reduce misaligned incentives that can needlessly escalate child welfare system involvement among youth with significant and complex needs. In addition, detailed analyses of services for youth transitioning to adulthood have helped us identify opportunities to streamline processes and align policy guidance.

Coming soon...

- Data analyses identifying needed capacity for residential services.
- Family voice drives vision for process improvements.
- Strategies to address community factors affecting the prevalence of mental health problems.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about the **Children's Behavioral Health Transformation Initiative** please contact Dana.A.Weiner@Illinois.gov