

Kansas Department of

Social and Rehabilitation Services

Gary Daniels, Acting Secretary

Joint Committee on Children's Issues
September 15, 2005

Therapeutic Services for Preschoolers

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Chairperson DeCastro and members of the committee, I am Steve Erikson, Director of Mental Health for the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. Thank you for letting me appear today to discuss the Therapeutic Services for Preschoolers Project, hereby referred to as the TSP project.

TSP is a demonstration project in conjunction with the University of Kansas with the purpose of creating or expanding services specifically targeted to preschool age youth experiencing or at risk for experiencing a serious emotional disturbance and to expand the research base and disseminate information and technical assistance with regards to developing early childhood mental health services in Kansas.

The Goals of the projects are:

1. Early Identification of children who experience or are at risk of experiencing a serious emotional disturbance
2. To preserve families and prevent out-of-home placements
3. To prepare children to enter Kindergarten with the emotional, social and other school readiness skills necessary to be successful learners.

This demonstration project began with the Kansas Legislature appropriating \$1.0 million dollars through the Children Initiative Funds to be distributed in FY2001 to focus on the mental health needs of young children. Social and Rehabilitation Services distributed the money through a request for proposal process to the community mental health system. The RFP planning process required community mental health centers (CMHCs) to develop their proposals with other systems/agencies that serve young children (i.e., Local Interagency Coordinating Councils, Head Start Programs, Public Health Departments, Regular and Special Education, etc.) and parents of young children experiencing a serious emotional disturbance. Priority was given to proposals if the programs were collaborative endeavors with other early childhood and/or preschool programs.

Six CMHC's were awarded grants. All six grantees have developed collaborations between the community mental health center and an existing early childhood serving agency such as Head Start and/or Special Education.

The purpose of the projects is to identify young children experiencing or at significant risk of experiencing a serious emotional disturbance early and to provide and/or connect the children

and their families to the supports and services known to be successful in producing positive outcomes in children with special needs.

Specific programmatic requirements of Therapeutic Services to Preschooler Projects include:

- Families with children participating must have access to case management to ensure that an array of comprehensive community based services with coordination across systems. Therapeutic Preschool Projects must ensure that the needs for support and /or intervention in the home, at the community level, and with other systems/agencies that may be involved with the child and/or family are met.
- Projects may have combination/inclusionary programming and must ensure that participating children receive care in the least restrictive, most normative environment that is clinically appropriate.
- Projects must be able to build upon a child's and family's strengths and potential in order to meet his/her unique needs through an individualized service planning process where families are full participants.
- All projects must have a multi-generational focus. TPS projects provide parenting support, educational/training opportunities, and a strong parenting outreach component.
- Projects must adopt a No Eject/No Reject philosophy which indicates a willingness to maintain all children in the program regardless of a child's actions, disposition or other behavioral challenges that may arise.

TPS projects are available to children regardless of race, religion, socio-economic status/income, national origin, gender, physical, developmental, emotional/mental disability or any other characteristics. Referral and access to the program are determined solely by the individualized needs of each child. Any service and/or program need is sensitive and responsive to cultural differences and the unique needs of the children involved.

During the 2005 fiscal year the unduplicated count of children served in the six grant-funded TSP programs was 446.

Attached to this testimony are the most recent outcomes of the Therapeutic Services to Preschoolers Projects and a descriptive matrix of the project.

This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer questions from the committee.