

**County of San Diego HHS Children's Mental Health Services Family & Youth Liaison**  
**Engaging Family and Youth in Policy, Program and Practice**  
**2011 Annual Report Highlights**

---

*Family & Youth Roundtable of San Diego County*

**Purpose:** to prepare a plan on how San Diego County Children's Mental Health Services (CMHS) and contract providers can best identify and engage families and youth to participate in CMHS program evaluation, policy, and practice-level development and enhancement activities.

**Foundation: The Importance of Family and Youth Involvement**

- Family and youth engagement and participation is integral to the mission and vision of CMHS.
- The success of the System of Care is reliant on family and youth partnering with practitioners in their own care and using experiences to inform program evaluation, policy, and development and enhancement activities.

**Challenges: Developing Robust Family and Youth Participation**

- There are many challenges from the perspective of the provider as well as family and youth receiving services, such as:
  - Provider agencies' organizational and treatment culture (evidenced by intervention models)
  - Practitioner attitudes and skills regarding the engagement of family/youth; ability to build on strengths
  - Whether participation by family/youth is valued and barriers to participation are proactively addressed
  - Family/youth expectations about their role as consumers of services
  - Ability of family/youth to be involved is determined by their mental health treatment progress
  - Stigma and the value of input perceived by family/youth; the burden of sharing input on time or resources
  - A dynamic system requires dynamic participation over a period of time

**Solutions: Creating a Culture of Participation**

- Robust family/youth participation stems from a nurturing and involving culture. The following are a set of solutions.
  - On the individual client level:
    - use intervention models that build upon individual and family strengths and community relationships
    - assure that all practitioners are trained in utilizing family/youth engagement and partnership-building
    - provide educational outreach to inform family/youth of importance of participation in directing own care
  - On the service system level:
    - policy makers and program administrations must create a variety meaningful opportunities in a respectful and supportive manner for family/youth to share their perspectives
    - invite families to participate and share how participation is helping improve services
    - inauthentic or token attempts may stifle interests

**Participation Engagement Plan: Dynamic Approach to Support Formal and Informal Participation**

- Nine useful strategies were created as a result of the *How to Engage Family & Youth* survey\*:
  1. Family-Centered Practice, Policy and Procedures
  2. Ongoing Practitioner Partnership Training
  3. Strength-Based Treatment Model
  4. Family/Youth Professional Partner Positions
  5. Administrator Champion of Family/Youth Participation in the Agency
  6. Agency-Sponsored Family and Youth Engagement Activities
  7. Educational and Engagement Materials
  8. Post-Treatment Partnership Questionnaire
  9. Annual Lived-Experience Report

*To request a copy of the full report, please contact the Family & Youth Roundtable at 619-546-5852 or email [peer2peer@fyrt.org](mailto:peer2peer@fyrt.org).*

\* The 2011 Annual Report was based on the results from the survey *How to Engage Family & Youth*, which was completed by 182 family and youth throughout San Diego County. The majority of respondents were parents or caregivers, followed by youth 18-25, youth 14-18, in addition to a small percentage of youth under the age of 14 participating. The ethnic identifications of respondents was as follows: Hispanic (28%), African American (20%), Caucasian (17%), Asian (14%), Pacific Islander (9%), Multi-ethnic (8%), and Native American (4%).