

Family Advocacy

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Why We Need Family Advocacy In Texas

- Texas ranks 49th in the nation in per capita mental health spending
- Texas child population is around 6 million
- Approximately 600,000 children have a mental health disorder
- About 159,000 children meet the criteria to receive community mental health services
- According to DSHS data in FY 2007 only 28,445 children were served

Family Advocacy Groups

- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) founded in 1979
 - NAMI Texas
- Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health founded in 1989
 - Parent Connection founded 1988
 - Texas Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health founded 1999

Family Voice In Texas

- Some state advisory committees have parent representatives
 - The Texas Integrated Funding Initiative (TIFI)
 - In 1999, Senate Bill 1234, 76th Legislature, Regular Session, 1999 created the [TIFI Consortium](#) and authorized up to six Texas Integrated Funding Initiative sites. The vision of TIFI is to develop [systems of care](#) in local communities for all Texas children with severe emotional disturbances, and their families, through the integration of federal, state, and local funds, and other resources. TIFI focuses on developing systems of care for children and youth with complex mental health needs, with families as full partners in the planning, implementation and evaluation of individual service programs based on their child's mental health and/or behavioral health (mental health, substance abuse or co-occurring mental disorders) needs.

Community Resource Coordination Groups (CRCG's)

- CRCGs originated when the Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 298 into law in 1987. This bill directed state agencies serving children to develop a community-based approach to better coordinate services for children and youth who have multi-agency needs and require interagency coordination.

The Children's Policy Council

- ([House Bill 1478 of the 77th Texas Legislature](#)) assists health and human services agencies in developing, implementing, and administering family support policies and related long-term care and health programs for children. The Council produces a biennial report with recommendations to the HHSC Executive Commissioner and the Texas Legislature.

The CPS Parent Collaborative

- The Parent Collaboration Group (PCG) provides a mechanism to include biological parents in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the CPS program. This initiative encourages collaboration with clients who are affected by the CPS service delivery system and provides a unique perspective on how to improve services to families and children.

The ECI Advisory Committee

- ECI is a statewide program for families with children, birth to three, with disabilities and developmental delays. ECI supports families to help their children reach their potential through developmental services.

The Governors Transformation Workgroup on Mental Health

- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has awarded \$92.5 million to seven states over five years for Mental Health Transformation State Incentive Grants, including Texas. Texas is charged with building a solid foundation for delivering evidence-based mental health and related services, fostering recovery, improving quality of life, and meeting the multiple needs of mental health consumers across the life span.

The Mental Health Planning Advisory Committee

- Federal requirement that States and Territories engage in mental health planning in order to receive federal Mental Health Block Grant funds. The laws further require that stakeholders, including mental health consumers, their family members, and parents of children with serious emotional or behavioral disturbances, must be involved in these planning efforts through membership in the planning and advisory council

Family Advocates Within The Service Delivery System In Texas

- Community Mental Health Centers now have Family Partner positions
 - Some centers contract with family organizations to supervise Family Partners
- TYC has Family Liaison positions
- CPS has a few parent positions

Set Backs In Family Advocacy In Texas

- Texas no longer funds any family advocacy organizations with federal block grant funds
 - Instead The Department of State Health Services issues grants from the federal block grant for certain Community Mental Health Projects
 - Mental Health America Texas is the only advocacy group to receive federal block grant funds to serve children but they are not a family advocacy organization

- The 78th legislative session enacted HB 2292 which consolidated many state agencies into one
 - This reorganization eliminated the Children’s Mental Health Unit
 - This reorganization has caused concerns from advocacy groups about clear accountability and adequate focus for Children’s Mental issues in the State

The Role of Family Advocates

“Families and professionals working together as partners is now recognized as a best practice. These collaborative partnerships have resulted in measurable and direct positive benefits for families, children and providers” (Family Support America. 1997. Making room at the table).

What Is Family Advocacy?

- Actively pleading in favor of a cause or for another person's rights as a peer
- Families have walked the walk and have valuable experiences to share
- Families can often speak about concerns and issues when professionals may not be able to
- Families provide a valuable voice that can lead to service system changes in policy, practice and funding
- Many Federal and State policies mandate parent involvement

What Some Family Advocates Provide

- Mentor other families
- Create policies
- Help shape programs
- Direct parent to parent advocacy groups
- Provide information and referral
- Provide education and advocacy