



Testimony to House Human Services Committee
HB 2048: Keeping Texas' System of Care Framework for Serving Minors
with Serious Emotional Disturbance
April 20, 2015

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) recommends using a “system of care” approach for meeting the complex needs of children and youth with serious mental health issues and their families. Based on recommendations from the Sunset Commission related to eliminating various advisory bodies and councils from statute, the HHSC Sunset bill (SB 200) repeals Sections 531.251 of the Government Code. In addition to dissolving the *Texas System of Care Consortium* advisory body which was established by the Texas Legislature in 2013 (SB 421) to advise the state on policies related to preventing and treating mental illness, but it also removes provisions related to HHSC’s role in planning and coordination activities aimed at promoting the recommended “system of care” framework at the state level. **HB 2048 would direct HHSC to continue promoting the use of this recommended approach after the advisory body is removed from statute.**

What is a “system of care” framework?

A system of care framework calls for collaboration between child and youth-serving systems, such as child welfare, juvenile justice, education and mental health, and the families they serve that enables communities to develop a single plan of care, accessing the unique array of community-based supports and services the family needs. It seeks to improve access to services that are effective, community-based, family-driven, youth-guided, and culturally and linguistically competent.

Characteristics of Systems of Care as Systems Reform Initiatives	
From	To
Fragmented service delivery	Coordinated service delivery
Categorical programs/funding	Multidisciplinary teams and blended resources
Limited service availability	Comprehensive service array
Reactive, crisis-oriented approach	Focus on prevention/early intervention
Focus on “deep-end,” restrictive settings	Least restrictive setting
Children out-of-home	Children within families
Centralized authority	Community-based ownership
Creation of “dependency”	Creation of “self-help” and active participation
Child-only focus	Family as focus
Needs/deficits assessment	Strength-based assessments
Families as “problems”	Families as “partners” and therapeutic allies
Cultural blindness	Cultural competence
Highly professionalized	Coordination with informal and natural supports
Child and family must “fit” services	Individualized/wraparound approach
Input-focused accountability	Outcome/results-oriented accountability
Funding tied to programs	Funding tied to populations

What is Texas currently doing to promote systems of care?

In 2011 HHSC received a grant from SAMHSA to develop a strategic plan for the statewide expansion of the system of care framework for serving children and youth with serious emotional disturbances and their families. The [Texas System of Care 2013-2017 Strategic Plan](#)¹ provides a roadmap to improve access to services that are effective, community-based, family-driven, youth-guided, and culturally and linguistically competent. It includes goals and activities to increase access to an array of effective services and supports, align fiscal strategies to support sustainable infrastructures, and expand the use of meaningful data to inform system accountability and quality. In 2013, HHSC entered into a four-year Children’s Mental Health Initiative (CMHI) cooperative agreement with SAMHSA to assist in implementing the strategic plan. This fiscal support has allowed for meaningful support for building community and state capacity to plan, implement, and evaluate system of care expansion in Texas. Progress over the past two years toward strategic plan goals and activities can be found in the [Texas System of Care Consortium 2014 Legislative Report](#).²

How will HB 2048 preserve existing state efforts to promote this recommended approach?

HB 2048 would:

- Define “system of care” as a framework for collaboration among state agencies, children and youth with or at-risk of developing a serious emotional disturbance, and their families that improves access to services that are effective, community-based, family-driven, youth-guided, and culturally and linguistically competent.
- Require HHSC to maintain a comprehensive plan for the delivery of mental health services and supports to a minor and a minor's family using a system of care framework.
- Require HHSC to enter into memorandums of understanding with non-health and human service agencies to identify the roles and responsibilities of each agency in implementing the comprehensive plan.
- Require HHSC to consult with families and youth in the implementation of provisions within the bill.

Texans Care for Children strongly urges the Committee to support HB 2048 so Texas continues to move forward in implementing this recommended approach to addressing the complex needs of children with serious emotional disturbance and their families.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Texas children and families. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 512.473.2274.

Respectfully,

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¹ <http://www.txsystemofcare.org/strategic-plan-to-expand-systems-of-care/>

² <http://www.txsystemofcare.org/reports-publications/>