

Regional Children's System of Care: A History

Over the past 20 years, there have been concerted national efforts to help states, tribes, and localities build systems of care for children and adolescents and families who require services and supports from multiple providers and systems. Those involved in building systems of care today are not operating in a vacuum. There is a considerable and rich history to systems of care. Twenty years ago, the concept of systems of care was applied initially to children and youth with serious emotional disorders and their families. It has evolved over time as a concept that can be applied to any designated population of children, youth, and families who require an array of services and supports from multiple entities.

Building Systems of Care, A Primer. Second Edition 2010. Sheila Pires

In 2009, the Statewide Children's Wraparound Initiative was established in Oregon with the passage of HB 2144 in the Oregon Legislature. Wraparound is a planning process which coordinates and integrates care for children and youth with complex behavioral health needs. The goal was to assure that children, youth, and families received the services they needed, when they needed them, so that children and youth could be healthy, happy and safe at home and in school.

In 2014, the Statewide Children's Wraparound Initiative was expanded with the use of Medicaid funds and a match from the Oregon State General Fund. It also received a new name: the System of Care Wraparound Initiative, commonly referred to as SOCWI. A "system of care" is a coordinated network of community-based services and supports which are responsive to each individual and provided within the least restrictive setting. It includes meaningful partnerships with youth and families who receive services, coordination and collaboration among agencies/systems providing services, and cultural and linguistic responsiveness. Initial grants were given to 13 coordinated care organizations (CCO: a type of Medicaid organization) throughout Oregon including urban, rural, and frontier settings. As of 2016, the Public Health Systems Division of the Oregon Health Authority proceeded with implementing SOCWI within all regions of the state.

As part of implementing SOCWI, a committee structure including representatives from different systems and sectors was established. This committee structure was named after the network of services it was charged with creating and maintaining: System of Care (SOC). Three governance committees were established: Practice Level Work Group, Advisory Committee, and the Executive Council. Similar to SOCWI, the new governance structure would be hosted within the local CCOs, Family Care and Health Share of Oregon, although multiple partners (including Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington Counties) would step up to support the SOC both administratively and financially.

The three SOC committees were intentionally designed to: 1) host members from all the different systems and organizations which serve children, youth, and families in our community; 2) include the meaningful participation of youth and family; and 3) be comprised of members that come from different levels of organizational authority and perspective in order to problem solve at all levels. A key defining attribute of the System of Care governance structure is that when communities, families, caregivers, and

front-line staff identify barriers to care, they can submit these barriers to the System of Care governance structure which then attempts to solve them.

Originally, there were separate local Systems of Care governance structures in Washington, Multnomah and Clackamas counties (for a total of 9 committees in the region). In 2017, after much deliberation, the three local Systems of Care committee structures merged into one regional structure, creating the Regional Children's System of Care. During this same year, Family Care closed and the regional structure had to reconfigure itself even more due to the loss of this partner.

In 2018, representatives of the Tri-County System of Care attended the Ideas to Action conference, hosted by the System of Care Institute at Portland State University, and identified key areas of work for strengthening the governance structure and the local continuum of services. In late 2018, two SOC Coordinators were hired to support the work of the regional committee structure.

In 2019, Wraparound services are functioning strongly and independently in the tri-county region. Additionally, the System of Care committee structure is successfully implementing projects in support of system-level change and busting barriers to care. It is also important to note that in 2019 Senate Bill 1 (SB1) passed the Oregon Legislature. SB1 created a State System of Care Advisory Committee to which local SOC can bring system barriers for review and resolution. SB1 also provides funding for SOC projects in local communities throughout Oregon.

Moving forward in 2020, the Regional Children's System of Care will continue busting barriers that children, youth, and families face as they access care in our community. Important work moving forward includes: seeking collaborative opportunities with a new CCO opening in the region, learning how best to interface with the newly established State System of Care Advisory Committee, and instituting new practices and processes to strengthen the existing governance structure. The Tri-County SOC will continue to place children, youth, and families in the center of its work, always remembering that they are the reason these many partners come together in collaboration for positive system change.