

ADDRESSING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUTH IN CHILD WELFARE

The REACH Institute, in collaboration with Casey Family Programs, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Harvard Medical School, Division of Trauma Psychiatry of the North Shore-LIJ Health System, and Columbia University, has developed the following resources to help child welfare agencies address the mental health needs of youth in care:

- Mental Health Practice Guidelines
- Mental Health Screening and Diagnostic Assessment Process
- Evidence-Based Treatment Training for Clinicians Serving Youth in Foster Care
- Parent Empowerment and Self-Advocacy (PESA) Curriculum
- *Taking Control* Youth Empowerment Curriculum

These resources have been piloted in foster care agencies in New York City and Houston as well as several Casey Field Sites located in Cheyenne, WA; Austin, TX; San Diego, CA; Seattle, WA; and Yakima, WY.

MENTAL HEALTH PRACTICE GUIDELINES

These guidelines are the result of work that began at the *2007 Best Practices for Mental Health in Child Welfare Consensus Conference*, organized by REACH and sponsored by Casey Family Programs and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The guidelines appear in the Jan/Feb 2009 special issue of *Child Welfare*, entitled *Mental Health Practice Guidelines for Child Welfare: Context for Reform* and are available at:

www.reachinstitute.net/REACH_professionals.html

A toolkit to help agencies implement the guidelines will be available for purchase from REACH in the Spring.

MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING AND DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT

REACH offers training to foster care agency staff in the use of the following tools:

- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
- Ohio Youth Problem, Functioning, & Satisfaction Scales (Ohio Scales)
- Early Warning Signs (EWS)
- DISC Predictive Scales (DPS)

Training entails learning how to administer each of the tools as well as and implement a screening process to quickly identify youth in need of a complete mental health evaluation and possible treatment.

EVIDENCE-BASED TREATMENT TRAINING FOR CLINICIANS SERVING YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

Hands-on, sustained training for mental health clinicians in brief, evidence-based interventions for (1) Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and other Disruptive Behavior Disorders, (2) Depression, (3) Anxiety, and (4) Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is available through REACH. Training involves 2 days of interactive instruction delivered by national experts followed by one year of bi-weekly consultation calls. Training focuses on the use of Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Behavior Therapy and other proven methods and the use of clear, easy-to-follow manuals.

PARENT EMPOWERMENT AND SELF-ADVOCACY (PESA) PROGRAM

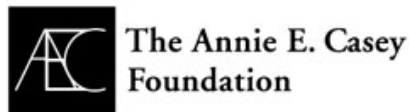
The Parent Empowerment and Self Advocacy (PESA) group curriculum helps birth parents, foster parents and caseworkers in the child welfare system collaborate effectively to meet the mental health and educational needs of their children. REACH provides PESA training to facilitator teams composed of a birth parent advocate, foster parent advocate and caseworker. Training involves self-study, 3-days of interactive instruction, practice and discussion followed by bi-weekly consultation calls. Once trained, the facilitator team can deliver the PESA curriculum to groups of birth parents, foster parents and caseworkers.

TAKING CONTROL YOUTH EMPOWERMENT CURRICULUM

Taking Control, an adaptation of the Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress (SPARCS©) program (DeRosa et al., 2005), is a six session, group program designed to help youth in foster care, ages 12-18, develop the self-awareness and skills to advocate for themselves and get their emotional, psychological and social needs met.

Led by a clinician and foster care alumni, the group provides an engaging and informal learning environment where youth members can learn new skills, support each other, and work together on a meaningful group project. *Taking Control* sessions focus on helping youth members learn new ways to handle the difficult situations that many of them face on a regular basis.

The Division of Trauma Psychiatry of the North Shore-LIJ Health System provides training and ongoing consultation in how to deliver the Taking Control curriculum to youth.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about any of the resources described in this flyer, please contact:

Lisa Hunter Romanelli, Ph.D.
Director of Programs
lisa@thereachinstitute.org