

Opportunities for Change

System of Care- Language Changes & Where to Start

System of Care is a large-scale system change. There are changes that you can make today to help support this transformation.

Change your language

Words have power and being intentional about how we talk about youth, families, and the children's mental health system is a tangible way to create change. Examples below shift from non-relational and non-hopeful language to a language of hope and partnership with youth and families.

Not Hopeful or Relational	The Language of Hope & Partnership
Kids, kiddo, case, client	Children, youth, students, residents
Mom, dad, adoptive mom/dad, those families	Parents, caregivers, non-binary labels, families
Placement	Treatment intervention, specify the setting
Refusing	Declining
Risks/vulnerabilities	Complicating factors
Removal	Separation
Reunification	Returning home
Home visits	Time at home, family time
Intake/discharge	Start services/end services
Placing a child/youth	Providing an intervention to meet a need

Where to start

Keep youth and families at the center. When making decisions, ask yourself and your colleagues “What does the youth want?” and “what does the family want?”

Engage in reflection about who benefits and who is burdened by decisions made and actions taken.

Practice self-reflection about how you can combat and not perpetuate stigma and mental health and substance use.

Reframe how you conceptualize the needs of youth and families. Rather than identifying a particular service or intervention as the need, instead consider what makes the service or intervention relevant to the youth and family; those are the needs. Our goal isn't to just plug in services, it is to address needs.

Contact

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