

**Oklahoma's Comprehensive Plan
for
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services**

September 2006

*Oklahoma's vision for transformation is that all our citizens will prosper
and achieve their personal goals in the community of their choice.*

Executive Summary

Oklahoma's Comprehensive Plan is a roadmap for full scale transformation of our state's mental health and substance abuse services. Oklahoma's transformation involves more than improving the traditional delivery of substance abuse and mental health services. Transformation means that the general public will understand that mental health and freedom from addiction are essential to overall health. Transformation means that Oklahomans will acknowledge that people with mental illness and addictive disorders can and do recover. It means that mental health and substance abuse services will be driven by consumer and family needs that focus on building resilience and facilitating recovery.

How will we know we are achieving our vision for transformation? This plan, to an extent, offers some answers to that question. The plan proposes actions that will yield continuous improvements in services and strategies to support our citizens living in the communities of their choice. Further, the Plan lays groundwork for services to be consumer and family driven. We will, in fact, be on the right road to transformation when those we serve are behind the wheel and leading us on the journey.

Work began several years ago to improve Oklahomans' access to quality substance abuse and mental health services. Recent years have seen increases in support and inter-agency partnerships around these issues. Regardless, much remains to be done. The recently completed Needs Assessment and Resource Inventory (<http://www.okinnovationcenter.org/>) reflects the significant resources and time devoted to the review of our state's public substance abuse and mental health system. It addresses unique problems within the system, such as the high number of people with untreated mental illnesses and addiction going to jail and prison systems. While this assessment provides an excellent mapping of needs, strengths and resources, the achievement of long-lasting improvements will require more than a simple "fix.". Be it expansion of an existing service or a change in a regulation or policy. Transformation will require new attitudes, behaviors and strategies to address long-standing deficiencies that make change difficult. Solving these problems requires time, and most importantly, requires active, committed, and sustained leadership.

To this end, Oklahoma has developed a comprehensive and effective plan for the transformation of its mental health and substances abuse services.

The Comprehensive Plan for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services initiates strategic and actionable objectives designed to move Oklahoma's mental health and substance abuse systems toward the day when all adults and children with mental, emotional, or addictive disorders will recover, live, and participate fully in their communities. The document is organized in seven sections. Sections I through VI address specific goals highlighted in the New Freedom Commission Report on Mental Health released under the auspices of President George W. Bush in 2003. Background for each is included in terms of an overview, benchmark data, and important findings from the recent needs assessment activities. Specific information is also included to summarize examples of strategic initiatives well underway in the state. For example, the Partnership for Children's Behavioral Health coordinates activities among several agencies and communities to improve services to Oklahoma's children and their families. The Adult Recovery Collaborative is providing a framework for a unified approach – based on recovery principles – to reorganize services for adults, including a single payer and reporting system. The Integrated Services Initiative is increasing provider capacity to recognize and treat co-occurring substance abuse and mental health disorders. Collaboration on initiatives such as these has become a hallmark of Oklahoma's willingness to work together for significant and lasting change.

Much of the analysis of challenges and priorities in this plan was conducted by four workgroups organized to assist the Transformation Advisory Board appointed by Governor Brad Henry as it provided guidance to the development of this plan. Bill Anoatubby, Governor of the Chickasaw Nation, chairs this Board. Those work groups were: Children's Behavioral Health, Adult Services, Workforce Development, and Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement. Summaries of all workgroup recommendations are included in Sections I – VI.

Each section is framed as a general goal and then proposes specific priorities, objectives, and action plans to attain that goal. Highlights of Sections I – VI are included below along with a brief summary of current work.

Section I focuses on Oklahomans understanding that being free from addictions and having good mental health are essential to overall health. Stigma elimination and suicide prevention activities are highlighted. Stigma is a tremendous challenge to improving understanding of the importance of mental illness and its influence on physical health. People may not seek care because of the social stigma that is associated with

the label of "mental illness". Another theme includes suicide, a serious public health challenge that has not received the attention it deserves. Many Oklahomans are unaware of its toll and impact. It is the leading cause of violent deaths worldwide, outnumbering homicide or war-related deaths.

Strategies in Section I include:

- *Developing a broad based public information strategy to reduce the stigma associated with mental health and substance abuse treatment and increasing public knowledge that recovery is possible,*
- *Strengthening the Oklahoma framework for suicide prevention, and*
- *Working with post-secondary training programs in a manner to reduce stigma, increase interest in working in the substance abuse and mental health fields, and expand the understanding of recovery and related best practices.*

Section II embraces recovery and resilience and proposes that care in Oklahoma will be consumer and family driven. The complexity of service systems can be overwhelming to many consumers and their family members. Substance abuse and mental health services are funded and provided through many separate state and local systems. Many of the services overlap and were not designed to serve people with multiple problems, or have a complex and contradictory set of rules. Therefore a consumer and their family's full participation in recovery may be limited. Furthermore, adults and parents of children in need of services typically have limited influence over the care they or their children receive. "Without choice and the availability of acceptable treatment options, people...are unlikely to engage in treatment or to participate in appropriate and timely interventions. Thus, giving consumers access to a range of effective, community – based treatment options is critical to achieving their full community participation." (*President's New Freedom Commission Report*)

Strategies in Section II include:

- *Assuring that care provided is individualized, recovery and resilience oriented, and clearly directed by those receiving services, even for those receiving services in multiple settings or from multiple systems,*
- *Ensuring settings, services, and systems are culturally competent, recovery focused, consumer driven, and trauma informed, and*
- *Increasing in consumer, family member, parent, and youth involvement in planning and coordination of services and systems.*

Section III addresses disparities in care. It is important for the services system to raise its standards in meeting the diverse needs of racial and ethnic minorities. These underserved populations have been historically neglected by a system that has failed to incorporate respect or understanding of their histories, traditions, beliefs, languages, and values into its way of providing care. While efforts to improve services for culturally diverse populations currently are underway, significant barriers still remain in access, quality, and outcomes of care for minorities.

Strategies in Section III include:

- *Improve the health of minorities and historically underserved individuals who receive mental health and substance abuse services and supports,*
- *Ensure that cultural competence is addressed and strengthened within the care-giving workforce, and*
- *Improve care in rural Oklahoma.*

Section IV highlights the importance of early screening, assessment and referral to substance abuse treatment and mental health services. Early detection, assessment, and referral to appropriate treatment and supports are critical to providing good healthcare. Early intervention can have a tremendous impact on the lives of those experiencing health conditions, especially a mental health or substance abuse disorder. Improved prevention and access to care will prevent problems from compounding and worsening. Early childhood intervention is an especially critical period. Children and adolescents without early intervention can accumulate problems that follow them into adulthood.

Strategies in Section IV include:

- *Develop systems that promote early access to treatment and supports for children and*
- *Develop a framework and capacity within adult and older adult service settings to screen and connect with needed services and supports.*

Section V focuses on quality of care and research to move promising practices to direct care settings. Effective, state-of-the-art treatments are vital for the delivery of quality care. Yet new effective practices are not being used at the earliest opportunity. In addition, there is a shortage of providers and many existing providers have not had the opportunity to be trained in evidence-based and other innovative practices. "This lack of education, training, or supervision leads to a workforce that is ill-equipped to use the latest breakthroughs in modern medicine." (*President's New Freedom Commission Report*)

Strategies in Section V include:

- *Connect science to mental health and substance abuse services by increasing the depth of science and service partnerships among stakeholders,*
- *Develop and sustain a culturally competent and trauma informed workforce, and*
- *Develop and implement a standardized statewide co-occurring assessment protocol that utilizes a menu of tools responsive to individual consumer needs.*

Section VI addresses the final set of recommendations from the New Freedom Commission Report. These challenge the state to use technology to access substance abuse treatment and mental health care and information. Through the application of technology Oklahoma can improve access to clinical health care services for people of all ages in rural areas, reduce isolation of rural practitioners, and foster the delivery of comprehensive, coordinated health care to rural residents.

Strategies in Section VI include:

- *Health technology and telehealth will be used to improve access and coordination of care for Oklahomans,*
- *Frameworks will be developed for integrated electronic health records and personal health information, and*
- *Data integration, analysis and reporting systems will be used to support stakeholder decision-making.*

Section VII addresses the infrastructure to be used by Oklahoma to govern and organize the implementation of the above proposed plan. This section describes the role of the Governor's Transformation Advisory Board, the strength and commitment of numerous partnerships, and the important interrelation between the Comprehensive Plan and work which will be continued through the federally-mandated Oklahoma Mental Health Planning and Advisory Council. Finally, this section describes the Innovation Center and how resources available through the Center will support transformation.