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**JACKSONVILLE RECEIVES \$9 MILLION GRANT TO BUILD SYSTEM OF MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR CHILDREN**  
*Funding will support transformation of current system of care for children and youth with serious emotional disturbances*

**JACKSONVILLE, Fla. Nov. 16, 2010** – Leaders in the pediatric/adolescent mental health and youth services fields today announced the community's receipt of a \$9 million grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The funds will be utilized to establish a system of mental health care for all children in Duval County. Entitled *Kids 'N Care*, the project will focus initially on children in foster care and the juvenile justice system, homeless children, as well as young, high-risk children in challenged neighborhoods.



"There is no community I know of more committed to the mental health and well-being of our children. This grant is recognition of this commitment and our capacity to build a benchmark system of care," said Jeff Goldhagen, M.D., with the University of Florida, who has spearheaded the project.



"I commend the numerous community partners for the great commitment they have demonstrated in order to make this happen," said City Council Vice President Stephen Joost. "We know how important this work is to the future of our children, our families, our workforce and our city. I'm confident that we're ready to take on this challenge."

The grant will provide the needed resources to help transform the existing youth mental health services into a system of care. Currently, families are challenged by the fragmentation of services and their lack of a voice on how services should be best delivered. The proposed *Kids 'N Care* model, supported by the grant funding and a public-private-academic sector partnership, will enable the community to better meet the needs of children and their families; expand the capacity for early identification and treatment; and improve access to appropriate, high-quality, customer-focused mental health services for children.

The proposed system of care will be implemented incrementally over a six year period. The Jacksonville Children's Commission will serve as the fiscal agent. The Partnership for Child



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Health, a non-profit agency affiliated with Children's Medical Services, will serve as the implementing organization.

The Children's Commission, the Early Learning Coalition of Duval, Inc. and Family Support Services (FSS) are critical partners in the initiative and have committed the required match funding for the first year. Ultimately, the community will need to raise a total of \$3 million to match the \$9 million provided through SAMHSA.

Year one of the initiative will establish a family-driven and youth-guided governance, committee, policy and management infrastructure. By the end of the first year, all children entering into the child welfare system, and those in the Family Support Services prevention program, will be enrolled in the system of care, approximately 2,000 per year. The knowledge and experience of FSS and the Department of Children and Families with transforming the foster care system will be integrated into the *Kids 'N Care* system of care.

In year two, children at-risk for entry into the Child Welfare System, such as homeless children, will be enrolled. In years two through six, children in the juvenile justice system, particularly those being discharged from the detention center, will be incrementally engaged in the *Kids 'N Care* system of care.

By year six, 2,000-4,000 young adults per year will be engaged in the system of care through the juvenile justice system. The system will respond to the poor health and mental health status and extreme racial and socioeconomic disparities that plague children in this community, and particularly those in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. *Kids 'N Care* will be built upon a foundation of the previous five years of consensus-building and work by the Northeast Florida Children's Mental Health Coalition to establish the infrastructure of a local youth mental health system of care.

Robert Friedman, Ph.D., professor emeritus, and other faculty from the Florida Mental Health Institute (FMHI) of the University of South Florida will provide technical assistance to the Children's Mental Health Coalition. He and the FMHI faculty have also assisted other Florida communities that have received funding for similar projects, including Palm Beach, Sarasota, Hillsborough County and Orange County.

At the announcement, Dr. Friedman provided insight as to how the proposed recommendations and available funding will provide the opportunity to transform the community's current means of accessing care.

"Jacksonville should be proud of its accomplishments, and now has the opportunity for transformative change to establish a family-driven and youth-guided system of care as a model for other communities in Florida and nationally," Dr. Friedman said.



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## Background:

Mental health is among the most critical and neglected health issues facing children and families in this community. In fact, more than 25 percent of children and youth will suffer from a mental health condition at some point in their childhood.

Left untreated, childhood mental health conditions are among the primary risk factors for school failure, suicide, criminal and anti-social behavior, and substance abuse among children, youth and adults.

Compared to the rest of the state, Duval County's children suffer the worst health outcomes and the most racial and socioeconomic disparities. When compared to the rest of the nation, Florida ranks 48<sup>th</sup> in per capita mental health spending. Moreover, Northeast Florida receives the least number of resources in the state and meets less than 18 percent of the needs of children with serious emotional disturbance.

That's why in 2006, both consumers and interdisciplinary professionals representing 32 agencies in the city convened as the Northeast Florida Children's Community Mental Health Coalition and completed an 18-month assets and needs assessment of children's mental health services. This work included a thorough review of existing research and best practices. As a result, policy recommendations (outlined below) were developed and will be used to implement the *Kids 'N Care* initiative for children ages birth to age 18 who are at risk for entry into the child welfare system.

1. Build a mental health system for children	9. Eliminate denial of services for Medicaid
2. Increase funding for mental health services	10. Train children/families to identify health issues
3. Establish a data collection system	11. Locate care near populations of children
4. Respond to the barriers for mental health services	12. Expand screening/referral by primary care doctors
5. Create a CEO-level task force	13. Implement care management
6. Prove judicial system with support for decisions	14. Integrate programs and services
7. Train pediatricians to identify and treat children	15. Establish a system coordinating body
8. Expand professional reimbursement	16. All children should be in a medical home.

Since its inception, the Coalition has used the assessment as a blueprint for systems change and development; has grown to over 50 organizations, professionals, consumers, family members and mental health advocates; and is recognized as the coordinating body for children's mental health services and advocacy in Northeast Florida. The Coalition, now part of the emerging Behavioral Health Network of Northeast Florida, will serve as the umbrella organization for the proposed *Kids 'N Care* initiative.

For more information, visit [www.partnershipforchildhealth.org](http://www.partnershipforchildhealth.org).

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