

Collaborative Adventures



Volume 7, Issue 3
June 2009

My System of Care Journey

By: Michelle Moreno

As I prepare to leave the Choices TA Center for new adventures at Tropical Memories on St. Armand's Circle in Sarasota, Florida, I started thinking about my system of care journey. All I can say is we've come a LONG way!

Nine years ago, not many people in Indiana had even heard of systems of care, not to mention understanding what that meant. At that time, we weren't sure what systems of care looked like outside of big cities in Indiana, and we really didn't know how to implement wraparound successfully. Wow, looking back it's a wonder we made it through the first year unscathed.



What got me through the first 2 years? The answer is simple. The Vigo County Community had developed an extremely supportive community consortium with strong leadership from all child serving systems and they shared a vision. When we first started working with families I had the unwavering support of those same directors and managers of children's mental health, child welfare, special education, juvenile justice and the school corporation. They were all involved in the referral process, child and family teams and many other levels of support and development of wraparound.

By 2002, systems of care in Indiana had reached a new understanding and spread like wildfire thanks to DMHA and the Choices TA Center. From 2002 to 2009, I have seen systems of care throughout Indiana grow leaps and bounds. We, as a state, gained a new understanding of what makes a system of care successful and how to provide effective wraparound services and support. We now know that the very things that contributed to success in the early years are the qualities of successful systems of care today.

Does that mean we do it perfectly? No. Does it mean we are getting better? Yes. So keep up the good work.

Some systems of care lessons I have learned:

- Everyone deserves never ending "strength based supervision" and nurturing
- The best managers are willing to take a chance now and then
- Success happens when the baby steps toward change – kids, families and agencies alike – are celebrated
- Listening is hard work ☺
- Successful systems of care require COLLABORATION – it can't be a one "man" show no matter how good "he" is
- Kids, families and people in general are worth every ounce of time, energy and resource we can give!

Thank you to every individual, organization, child and family that was a part of my system of care journey. It has been a life enriching experience that I will always hold dear. One parting thought. The values of system of care: Family Driven, Culturally Competent, and Community Based are simple but profound. As I transition into a new world outside of social services, I am beginning to see these values as simply good human behavior. Think about this.

- Doesn't everyone want to determine their own path?
- Doesn't everyone want their values to be respected?
- Doesn't everyone want to be a part of a community?

I think so. I'll do my best to uphold these values wherever I go. I hope you will too.

All the best to you,
Michelle