

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM OF CARE KEY INFORMANT SURVEY

SEPTEMBER 2019

Obtaining data from persons who's professional and/or organizational roles require they have knowledge about children's mental health and substance abuse services in the Rockford area, specific characteristics of the population, as well as potential pathways and constraints for community change can be instrumental in designing a system of care.

Produced for: Children's Mental Health System of Care
Community Planning Team
Produced by: Center for Governmental Studies, Northern Illinois University



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**Center for
Governmental Studies**

Outreach, Engagement, and Regional Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Children's Mental Health System of Care Community Planning Team worked with the Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) at Northern Illinois University to conduct a key informant survey about the Rockford area's current children's mental healthcare system, including strengths and areas for improvement. The survey findings will be used, along with other data, to design a children's mental health system of care in the Rockford area. An online survey was administered to 161 key informants. A total of 51 key informants completed the survey resulting in a 33% response rate. The key informants represent a variety of organizations, including mental health and substance abuse agencies, private counseling practices, hospitals, county health departments, social service agencies, government agencies, police departments, fire departments, and schools.

The key informants believe the main strength of the current children's mental healthcare system is the variety of mental health services available in the Rockford area.

The key informants identify the following areas for improvement of the current children's mental healthcare system:

- **Funding**
 - Lack of funding is mentioned as a barrier across all the areas of improvement.
- **Workforce Development**
 - The key informants report there is not enough service providers in the Rockford area, especially child psychiatrists. They state that there are long wait lists for services
 - The key informants comment that it is difficult to recruit service providers to the area and that wages are low and stagnant.
 - They mention that there is a high rate of staff burnout and turnover among existing staff, which leads to a lack of consistency for patients.
 - They think that the existing staff need additional training, including crisis-intervention and trauma-informed training.
- **Equity/Access**
 - The current services that are available in the Rockford area are not affordable or accessible to all residents, especially low-income residents, Latinos, and African Americans.
 - The key informants indicate that there are not enough service providers that low-income residents can afford.
 - There is a need for more Spanish speaking service providers and interpreters.
 - Transportation and the locations of current service providers are barriers to access to services.
 - The key informants comment that more home-based services are needed.

- **Collaboration**

- To improve the current children's mental healthcare system greater collaboration and coordination among organizations is needed.
 - The key informants think that there is a lack of coordination and systemic approach to service provision in the Rockford area that needs to be addressed. They state that silos exist between the organizations and that there is a lack of communication between the organizations about what they are doing.
 - The key informants state that the Rockford area needs an inpatient child unit because currently children have to go out of town for inpatient mental health treatment. To address this need they recommend that there be a collaborative approach among the health systems.
 - The schools do not have the support or resources needed for the number of children in the Rockford area that have emotional or behavioral problems. The key informants indicate that partnerships between the schools and agencies can help address this issue.

- **Engagement**

- The key informants discuss the importance of engaging and educating the community about children's mental health and the mental healthcare services available in the Rockford area. In particular, engaging and educating parents of children is essential. However, according to the key informants, cultural barriers get in the way of accomplishing this task. The key informants indicate that the available mental healthcare services for children need to be better promoted to the community.