



# SYSTEM OF CARE

System of Care (SOC) is a comprehensive, community-based framework designed to support children and youth with behavioral health challenges and their families. Rather than being a single program, SOC is an approach that integrates services across multiple systems such as education, health care, and social services, into a coordinated network. Its goal is to ensure families receive individualized, strength-based care in the least restrictive and most natural environment possible. SOC emphasizes collaboration among agencies, cultural and linguistic responsiveness, and equitable access to quality mental health services.

## Core Values

Family-Driven & Youth-Guided

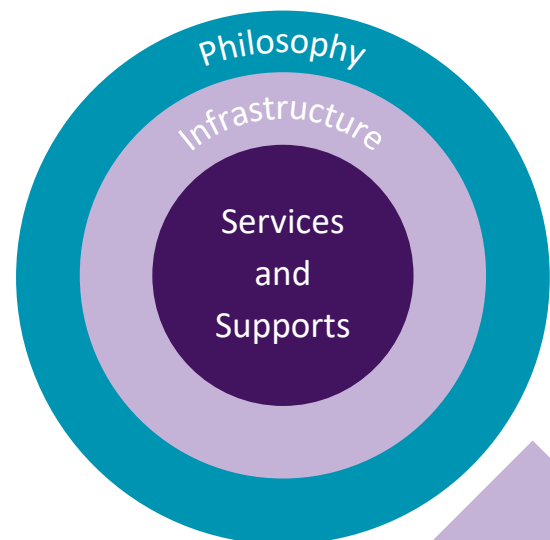
Community-Based

Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate

## Guiding Principles

- Comprehensive Array of Effective Services and Supports
- Individualized, Strengths-Based Services and Supports
- Evidence-Based Practices and Practice-Based Evidence
- Trauma-Informed
- Least Restrictive Natural Environment
- Partnerships with Families and Youth
- Interagency Collaboration
- Care Coordination
- Health-Mental Health Integration
- Developmentally Appropriate Services and Supports
- Public Health Approach
- Mental Health Equity
- Data Driven and Accountability
- Rights Protection and Advocacy

At its broadest level, a System of Care has three major elements - an array of services, a supportive infrastructure, and an underlying philosophy that guides the system and services.





# FAMILY PEER SUPPORT IN A SYSTEM OF CARE

Family peer support is a vital part of a System of Care. SOC is designed to make services individualized, accessible, and coordinated. Family peer support brings this vision to life by ensuring families have a voice, receive personalized help, and can navigate systems without feeling alone. A Family Peer Support Specialist is a trusted partner who understands their journey and helps them navigate complex systems.

## System of Care in Practice

In a system of care, services are tailored to meet each family's unique needs, so there is no single right way to provide support. Family peer support should be culturally and linguistically competent, arranging translation when needed. Family choice is essential. Families should be able to select phone, virtual, or in-person support. Below are examples of how Family peer support works within a System of Care approach.

- Reframing challenges in a strengths-based way: Helping families reframe difficulties by focusing on strengths to build confidence and resilience
- Participating in Child and Family Team meetings: Supporting families to collaborate on ideas and strategies that address challenges, ensuring the family's voice is central in planning
- Supporting families during crises: Acting as part of a mobile crisis and stabilization services, supporting families during stressful situations, helping avoid unnecessary ER visits
- Connecting families to respite and other supports: Linking parents to short-term relief services, reducing stress and preventing burnout
- Supporting families in school settings: Attending school meetings with families to ensure their voice is heard to improve home-school collaboration to meet the child's educational and emotional needs
- Helping families navigate choices: Explaining available services and support options and empowering them to make choices that align with their family goals

Data confirms that a System of Care approach doesn't just feel supportive; it delivers measurable results: lower costs, improved mental health, better family well-being, and stronger service coordination.

- 69% of youth demonstrated significant improvement in emotional and behavioral health scores after 12 months in SOC services.
- School attendance improved by 24% for youth participating in SOC programs.
- Families reported a 40% reduction in caregiver strain after receiving SOC-based services.
- Communities implementing SOC reported a 60% increase in interagency collaboration, measured by shared planning and integrated service delivery.

SAMHSA CMHI National Evaluation Report, 2021

A System of Care approach changes lives by connecting services, empowering family voice, and focusing on strengths. SOC creates a pathway to hope, healing, and better outcomes for every child, youth, and family.