

THE  
 Working Together to  
Build Better Care  
For Children and Families  
ACCESS TO BETTER CARE  
INITIATIVE

February 2005

## Introduction

Over the past eighteen months, leaders across the human services spectrum have come together to develop a plan to address the behavioral health needs of children throughout Ohio. This effort, which is referred to as the Access to Better Care (ABC) Initiative, came out of the growing realization that short changing kids with alcohol, drug and/or mental health services needs results in increased costs in other parts of the system. More specifically, lack of care can lead to drug use, teen pregnancy, criminal behavior, failure in school and other expensive problems for which taxpayers often foot the bill.

To effectively address this issue, ABC participants agreed that their recommendations must focus on prevention, early assessment and effective treatment. Each of the recommendations are grounded in the belief that family participation is paramount, services should be offered within the community whenever possible, and system collaboration is non-negotiable.

## ABC Recommendations



Provide prevention and early intervention services for children, youth and their families who are at risk of developing behavioral health disorders.



Provide early screening, assessment and treatment for behavioral health needs to all children and youth from birth until age 18.



Address and provide treatment for children, adolescents and families with multiple needs.



Continue and expand efforts and strategies among state departments to provide behavioral health services to children, adolescents and families.



Provide enough funding for all child-serving departments to support these services at a local level.

## What Do the Statistics Say?!

- Today in Ohio, only half of the 240,000 children who need mental health treatment receive it.
- Only 1/3 of the 68,000 youth aged 12 – 17 with a drug or alcohol problem receive the treatment they need.
- Ohio families have been forced into giving up custody of their children so that they may receive access to appropriate and timely mental health services.
- Many Ohioans must wait on long – 3 month average – waiting lists to receive help.

## FAST'05

In September 2004, the Administration announced that it was taking immediate steps to begin to address the issue of families relinquishing custody to secure access for necessary and intensive treatment for their children with severe behavioral health needs. A small amount of funds from the Ohio Departments of Mental Health, Job and Family Services, Youth Services and Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services were pooled and immediately made available to local systems through Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Boards, Community Mental Health Boards and Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services Boards. A key aspect of this down payment, known as FAST'05, includes the requirement that Boards submit a plan of action that shows how community agencies will work together to use these funds to engage families and expand their services and support for children and families at highest risk.

## Parent Advocates

The role of a parent advocate is to help parents navigate the social service system and to ensure that parents have a voice in the planning process for their child. They attend planning meetings with the parent and provide support and information to any parent who desires their assistance. Under the FAST'05, funds were set aside to assist families with children who are being served with these dollars. The ABC Initiative strongly embraces the continuation of this concept.

## Costs for Treatment

Intensive Home and Community Based Services	\$5,184
Therapeutic Foster Care	\$25,330
Group Home	\$41,245
Residential Treatment	\$51,100 - \$100,000
Department of Youth Services	\$65,700

## ABC Participants

Center for Innovative Practices  
Office of the Governor  
Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities  
Ohio Citizen Advocates  
Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services  
Ohio Department of Education  
Ohio Department of Health  
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services  
Ohio Department of Mental Health  
Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities  
Ohio Department of Youth Services  
Ohio Family and Children First  
Ohio Federation for Children's Mental Health  
Public Children Services Association of Ohio