



Voices of Wellness

The Kansas System of Care Newsletter

Welcome!

We are so excited to share the first Kansas System of Care newsletter with you. This year has been an exciting one of learning and progress.

The purpose of this newsletter is to highlight all the incredible work being done in your Community Mental Health Centers as well as to share System of Care news.

We look forward to continuing on this journey with you into 2018 and beyond. Thank you for your dedication and perseverance.

Sincerely,

Kelsee Torrez
Kansas System of Care Project Director



Community Mental Health Center Updates



South Central Mental Health Counseling Center

South Central launched a county wide truancy early intervention program utilizing a new System of Care position, Youth Community Liaison, which will accept school referrals for early contact to provide behavioral interventions, support and resources to families and students struggling with school refusal. This program's intention is to keep kids in school before school refusal becomes an issue which results in school referrals to the County Attorney for Truancy status and involves reports to Department for Children and Families (DCF) or Juvenile Justice Authority (JJA).

South Central has launched a new program to support families, peers and school staff of youth who have attempted suicide. The child / youth suicide attempt rate continues to grow in our community and school counselors contacted SCMHC requesting how to advise and counsel those who find themselves in support roles for suicide attempt survivors. The program is referred to as ASAP, Attempted Suicide Awareness Prevention for Parents and Youth. Information on local and national resources, what to say and how to best support someone who is struggling with attempted suicide for families, friends and other caregivers in the youth's life is now available in a brochure. Also, included as a local resource is an opportunity for parents to reach out to network with other parents supporting their youth by emailing an ASAP parent support staff.

Sumner Mental Health Center

Sumner is excited to begin building their mental health focused youth group in Sumner County.

Staff Highlight

Allison Esquivel and Cecilia Ortiz are two child case managers working out of Compass Behavioral Health's Garden City office. Allison and Cecilia were the first children's staff to tackle Compass' vision of serving more youth in schools under the System of Care. They began in the last nine weeks of the 2016-2017 school year serving referrals from school counselors on site at both of the middle schools and the high school in Garden City.



They quickly formed close working relationships with the counselors at these schools, helping school staff to understand and become excited about the program. They served youth one on one during that first nine weeks, seeing each youth a minimum of four times before recommending additional services or wrapping up their work with them.

As the 2017-2018 school year began, we had schools asking if Allison and Cecilia would be back! As they began working back at the schools, they had counselors asking if they could see kids they saw last school year. Youth had formed connections with them and were asking to be seen again. Many of these youth would never have stepped through the doors at the mental health center. They would have never found help, a listening ear or someone to teach them ways to handle whatever struggle they were facing. Allison and Cecilia have touched many lives and have been able to guide youth to needed services to better their behavioral health.

The Life Savers: Be Kind and Don't Look Back

In June, South Central Mental Health Center started inviting youth to get together on a bi-weekly basis in order to create a youth-guided group. What started as four youth quickly grew to eight members at almost every meeting. They named themselves the Life Savers, decided on a mission and vision, and outlined their goals for the upcoming year. The members of this group decided their purpose should be to help those in need and to spread kindness.



“Life Savers seeks to be there for those who need support and provide resources and guidance to those in difficult situations.”



The Life Savers held their first event on October 27th at their local Walmart. The youth named this event the “Be Kind” event to go along with their vision, “Don’t Look Back”. They handed out bracelets saying “Be Kind and Don’t Look Back” and brochures about their group. Members of the group also collected donations for future group activities. The Life Savers have community outreach events planned for the holiday season, such as sponsoring a family and baking cookies for a shelter.

From the Social Marketing Committee:

5 Ways to Take Care of Yourself

When You Don't Feel Like It

1. Talk with friends and family you trust.

Something amazing happens when we talk about our feelings. It opens our minds and our hearts and helps us build strong, lasting relationships with the people around us. When we cry or vent, we are creating more space within us for the positive things. According to [Dr. Goldsmith](#), "Expressing your pain is actually a good way to make it stop."

2. Do things to make yourself feel happy.

We're talking about the simple things. There is all kinds of evidence that taking care of your body makes your mind feel better. If you're hungry, eat something good. If you're lonely, spend time with people you love. Put on your favorite outfit, use your favorite lotion. Treat yourself the way you would treat a friend.

3. Immerse yourself in your favorite game, book, or movie.

Don't underestimate a little escapism. The familiarity of your favorite fictional world can go a long way in centering you and helping you tackle self-care. Sometimes, those fictional places feel like home.

4. Get outside, even if it's not sunny.

Fresh air, nature, focusing on the world around you--it's so good for your brain. If you feel like exercising, go for it! Or just take your book outside and sit on a bench while you read. Soaking up some fresh air (and sunshine) can dramatically improve your mood. [It's science!](#)

5. Create something.

This can mean the usual painting or drawing, or it can mean writing a poem or story. It can also mean creating a clean space for yourself, baking a batch of cookies from scratch, or planting flowers outside. Whatever feels like a creative outlet to you, go for it.

6. Break a small rule (even if it's a rule you've made for yourself).

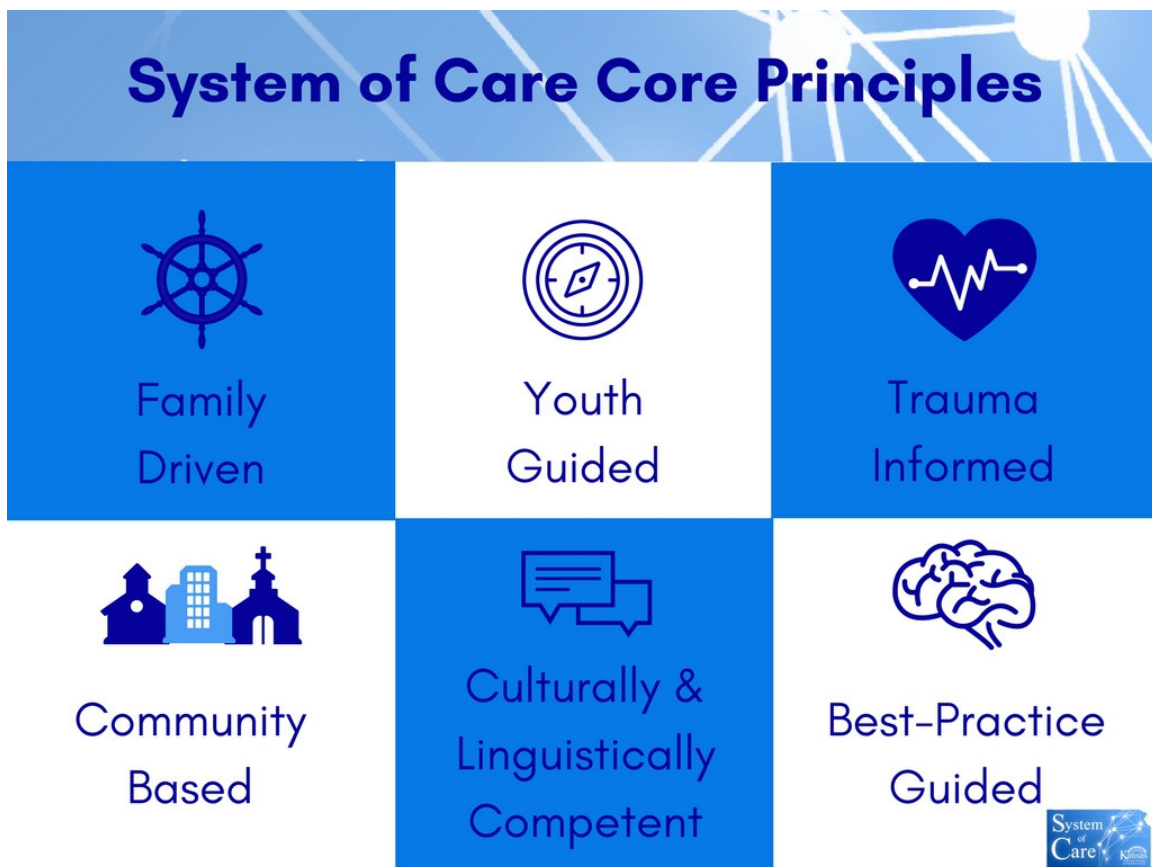
We think this one is important. When we're not feeling good, we often make a lot of rules for ourselves. Breaking small rules reminds us that we're independent people in control of our own lives. Think about the consequences first, then do what you can to step outside the boundaries and enjoy your life! (We broke the rules by adding a sixth tip when we only planned for five--because we're rebels.)



What is Youth Peer Support?

One of the vital parts of the Kansas System of Care (SOC) is Youth Peer Support. Understanding Youth Peer Support and how it works gives valuable insight into how SOC itself works. Youth Peer Support is designed to help young people support one another in the transition into adulthood. As its name suggests, Youth Peer Support is comprised only of youth—adults are not involved in this process other than as a support for the youth. Youth run the meetings and make all the decisions. Because they are in control of this experience, it leads to destigmatization, relationship building, affirmation, normalization, and individualized support.

The most important part of this type of support is that it is run by youth, for youth. Youth Peer Support Specialists (YPSSs) have a unique role to support the youth as they run their groups. YPSSs are typically 18-25 years old and are not therapists or spokespeople. They don't tell the youth what to do or how to run the group. Instead, they're simply available as a resource to youth. This unique environment allows young people to make essential decisions in their own health and wellness and upholds the core values of the Kansas System of Care. If you have questions about Youth Peer Support, please email SOCYouthLead@wichita.edu.





You Can Get Involved!

Statewide SOC Advisory Council

The Kansas System of Care Advisory Council is a passionate group of youth, families, mental health professionals, consumers, and others who guide the work of the Kansas System of Care. Together, they make vital decisions regarding the children's mental health system. With their invaluable lived experience, they provide insight into the current mental health system, provide feedback, and brainstorm new ways to support youth and families.

Anyone can be part of the Advisory Council. If you're interested in joining this amazing group of people, contact KDADS at kdads.systemofcare@ks.gov.

Social Marketing Committee

The Social Marketing Committee is tasked with overseeing the System of Care communication efforts throughout the State of Kansas. They developed a Social Marketing Strategy and work together to stay abreast of upcoming awareness campaigns, trending needs, and new ways to reach people with System of Care resources. This group invites new ideas and techniques for an inclusive approach to reaching Kansans.

Anyone can join the Social Marketing Committee. If you're interested in joining this innovative group, contact KDADS at kdads.systemofcare@ks.gov.

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