

# Education and System of Care

Terri Miller, Ph.D., IRCA Consultant

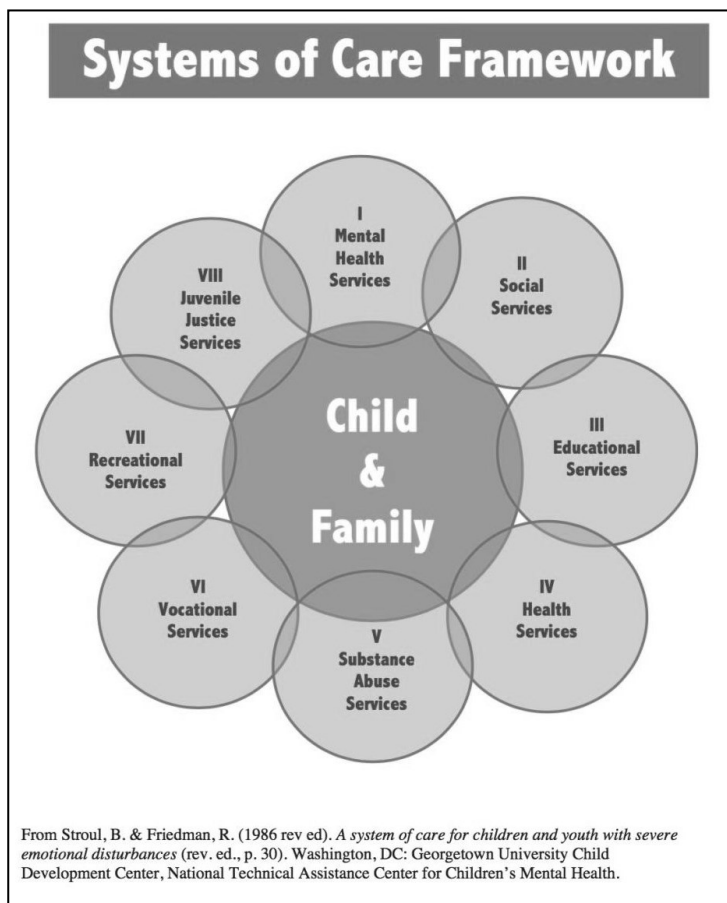
## We keep hearing statements like:

“Our school has students with significant social, emotional and learning challenges. We want to support these students and their family members, but we often feel like we are alone in this support. It would be great if we had a way to work together with other agencies in our community.”

The purpose of this paper is to provide a snapshot of a systems approach that has proven to have long term, positive outcomes for youth, their families and for the communities where these families live.

For the purposes of this paper, think of the school as one community agency working collaboratively with the other agencies in the community.

## First, some background:



The concept of System of Care (SOC) was first articulated in 1986 as a framework and philosophy. This framework was designed to guide the mental health field to reform child-serving systems, services and supports to better meet the needs of children and youth who were impacted by serious mental health challenges in their communities.

The strength of SOC is that it is the foundation upon which to collectively shape the work of community agencies and organizations in ways that have proven effective in meeting the needs of youth and families. States and local communities have realized efficient and effective results as youth have been able to remain in their communities and in their homes with their families and realize better long-term results at much less cost.

In 2011, the SOC philosophy and values were reexamined due to

experiences and increased knowledge as well as recognition of changing needs. An issue brief was written (Updating the System of Care Concept and Philosophy. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development, National Technical Center for Children’s Mental Health) to outline this evolution and offer updates and suggestions on how to continue to better meet the needs of youth and communities. For example, youth are now guiding, and in some cases, driving system change at all levels (Stroul, B., Blau, G., & Friedman, R., 2010). The current SOC concept and philosophy includes children and youth at risk and other populations instead of just students who have serious mental illnesses. A functional System of Care allows, in fact requires us, to look at prevention and intervention in a systemic manner.

System of Care Values
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Family Driven and Youth Guided</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community Based</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Culturally and Linguistically Competent</b></li> </ul>
System of Care Supporting Principles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Broad Array of Effective Services and Supports</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Individualized and Least Restrictive</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Promotion, Prevention, Early Identification</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Accountability</b></li> </ul>

**Why is it important for educators to understand the SOC Framework?**

When the SOC concept and values are implemented in a community, our schools have an opportunity to collaborate with community members in a structured fashion. Schools simply do not have the resources and expertise to do this work alone. In collaboration with community stakeholders, including youth and families and agency partners, we collectively define challenges in the community, brainstorm about how to meet them together and ensure that the services and supports provided are relevant to the population served. Resources from the different agencies such as the Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) can provide more relevant and appropriate options to assist children, youth and families. In Indiana, that means prevention, intervention and services in an individualized fashion in the least restrictive environment. The key to this is meaningful collaboration.

Please consider the following steps to begin or to participate in SOC development in your community.

First: If you have not done so or do not participate in your SOC, contact the coordinator. The contact information for your SOC coordinator is provided at: <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/styles/iidc/defiles/IRCA/IndianaLocalSOCCoordinators.pdf>.

Second: If you have not had contact with your mental health access point, do so and explore the services families could expect to access through the access point. This contact information for your county is provided as well at <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/styles/iidc/defiles/IRCA/CMHWAcessList.pdf>.

Third: Engage and/or support the activity of community resource mapping if the access point and/SOC coordinator is in that process. This can be a lengthy process, but well worth the time to determine what practices, initiatives, partnerships, agencies, supports, etc. are available to meet the differing needs of youth, families and other community members.

The ultimate goal is to create a system that is youth and family responsive and that thoughtfully organizes resources that benefit all involved.

## References

Stroul, B. & Friedman, R. (1986 rev ed). *A system of care for children and youth with severe emotional disturbances* (rev. ed., p. 30). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Child Development Center, National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health.

Stroul B., Blau, G., & Friedman, R. (2010). *Updating the system of care concept and philosophy*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development, National Technical Center for Children's Mental Health.

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