

Helping Mental Health Providers Achieve the **Outcomes That Matter Most**

ACCESS



What Youth and Families Want:

- Individualized care
- Services in a plan of care are available and of high quality
- Easy to access services
- Range of services to meet needs

How the National Center Can Help:

- Increase number of trained behavioral health professionals
- Expand telehealth provision
- Retool referral process to be streamlined, effective, and efficient
- Provide linkages to the adoption competent directory
- Streamline care pathways
- Enlist Medicaid, Managed Care Organizations, and contracted agencies to train, advertise, and build in provider requirements

COLLABORATION



What Youth and Families Want:

- Cultural responsiveness
- Increased cooperation and communication among providers across systems
- Be partners in care with families

How the National Center Can Help:

- Increased Collaborative Policies, Procedures and Structures
- Partner with Systems of Care
- Identify and partner with parent and youth support networks
- Strengthen interagency agreements and practice guidelines to coordinate referral and service delivery across systems
- Strengthen data sharing agreements or practices to include AC information
- Design information flow across relevant systems
- Establish cross training opportunities including systems and families
- Provide an evaluation plan that States, Tribes, and territories can use to monitor progress post engagement

RESOURCES & KNOWLEDGE



What Youth and Families Want:

- Ideas and strategies for parents to support children's emotional and behavioral needs, manage their crises, and support skill development
- Share knowledge about mental health and well-being in children and youth
- Community resources available
- Providers themselves have access to more knowledge, resources, and tools to enhance the quality of care provided.

How the National Center Can Help:

- Our Knowledge Hub has over 450 resources for mental health practitioners, child welfare staff, youth, families, and professional allies.
- The Hub includes specialty topics such as engaging Tribal families and fathers.
- Our webinars, publications, and podcasts focus on best practices.

WORKFORCE



What Youth and Families Want:

- Less judgment, bias, and blame
- Feeling respected
- Provider access to knowledge and tools
- Individual care
- Encouragement
- Well trained, confident & capable

How the National Center Can Help:

- Train the behavioral health workforce in adoption competency
- Provide NTI coaching to move knowledge and skill into practice
- Link agencies/ provider organizations to the Knowledge Hub for ongoing learning opportunities
- Identify and partner with parent and youth support networks
- Engage youth and parents with lived experience

Youth and Family Behavioral Health Service Priorities: Identifying Outcomes that Matter

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Motivation and goals of the project

Family goals for bringing a child to mental health services should drive behavioral health research, policy, and practice for children and youth. However, funding for behavioral research and services is often tied to narrowly defined service outcomes that are easy to measure and well-validated. Families and researchers know there is a disconnect between outcomes that matter to families and outcomes acceptable for research and practice. While the outcomes used widely in research and policymaking are well-known and widely disseminated in peer-reviewed publications and policy documents, the behavioral health service outcomes that matter most to youth and families have not been formally collected

and reported. This project aims to document outcomes that are most important to families and youth who use behavioral health services.

Findings

Through a series of focus groups conducted with youth and young adults using behavioral health services and caregivers and parents of children and youth using behavioral health services, the behavioral health service outcomes most important to participants were collected and are summarized in the graphic on the next page. More detailed information about these outcomes can be found at <https://www.fredla.org/wpcontent/uploads/2023/08/Expanded-Outcomes.V4.pdf>.

Implications

While much of child and youth behavioral health services research focuses heavily on clinical and functional improvements, families care most about the quality of their service experience. Discussions with families revealed that the service experience feels essential to achieving service goals related to improving well-being and functioning of youth and their families. These results provide a foundation to build new evidence on measuring and validating outcomes that matter to families and support partnerships in services to incorporate in future research.



Member Participants



Allegheny Family Network, PA



Families as Allies, MS



The Family Involvement Center, AZ



Mental Health Transformation Alliance, NC



Washington State Connectors, WA



Nevada PEP, NV



Methods

FREDLA collaborated with six Family-Run Organizations (FROs) to conduct virtual focus groups in six U.S. communities (Nevada, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, Washington, North Carolina, and Arizona). Each FRO organized two rounds of focus groups: one for parents/caregivers and another for Youth and Young Adults (YYA). Each group included about six YYA participants and six parents/caregivers. Participants were compensated, and groups were held online for one hour each in Feb. and Apr. 2023.

The discussions, led by researchers and local staff/volunteers, aimed to understand positive experiences in behavioral health services. Questions included what outcomes participants hoped for and what makes a good service experience. Round 1 findings guided Round 2 discussions using coded themes from participant feedback. Final outcomes were refined through collaborative sessions with FROs, ensuring clarity and relevance. Transcripts were coded independently with high reliability to identify top outcomes for YYA and parents/caregivers.

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