

# Child and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP)

CASSP helps children and adolescents with emotional disturbances to gain access to needed services. These services are planned collaboratively with the child/adolescent's family, the mental health system, the school and other agencies. CASSP is based on a well-defined set of principles for mental health services for children/adolescents with or at risk of developing severe emotional disorders and their families.

These principles are summarized in six core statements.

- **Child-centered:** Services meet the individual needs of the child, consider the child's family and community contexts, and are developmentally appropriate, strengths-based and child-specific.
- **Family-focused:** Services recognize that the family is the primary support system for the child and participates as a full partner in all stages of the decision-making and treatment planning process.
- **Community-based:** Whenever possible, services are delivered in the child's home community, drawing on formal and informal resources to promote the child's successful participation in the community.
- **Multi-system:** Services are planned in collaboration with all the child-serving systems involved in the child's life.
- **Culturally competent:** Services recognize and respect the behavior, ideas, attitudes, values, beliefs, customs, language, rituals, ceremonies and practices characteristic of the child's and family's ethnic group.
- **Least restrictive/least intrusive:** Services take place in settings that are the most appropriate and natural for the child and family and are the least restrictive and intrusive available to meet the needs of the child and family.

Regional children's teams, consisting of representatives from mental health and substance abuse, mental retardation, education and child welfare, deal primarily with systems issues but also sometimes help to resolve problems for specific children/adolescents and families. CASSP Advisory Committees also function at the county level, bringing together families, advocates and people from mental health, mental retardation, child welfare, drug and alcohol, health, juvenile justice, special education and regular education on behalf of children/adolescents with mental health needs.