



Albany County, New York System of Care Evaluation

The Center for Human Services Research (CHSR) led the congressionally-mandated, mixed-methods evaluation of the Albany County, New York system of care.

Albany County received funding from 2004 to 2010 under a grant initiative from the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) of the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) to develop a local system of care.

The Systems of Care initiative, administered by the Child and Family Branch of CMHS, was launched in 1993 and was the largest child mental health services initiative ever funded. Grants were awarded to more than 150 communities to support the development of local systems of care for children with serious emotional disturbance. A system of care was conceptualized as a coordinated network of community-based services and supports organized to meet the challenges of children and youth with serious mental health needs and their families. The system of care in Albany County (Families Together in Albany County) was a partnership between the [Albany County Department for Children, Youth, and Families](#) and [Families Together in New York State, Inc.](#)

EVALUATION & RESEARCH

The evaluation of the Albany County system of care conducted by CHSR was part of the national evaluation of all system of care communities, coordinated by [ICF Macro](#), and [Walter R. McDonald Associates](#). CHSR completed the following evaluation components:

- A **Descriptive Study** that collected demographic characteristics, social and functional characteristics, mental health diagnoses, and presenting problems on all children/youth entering the system of care.
- A **Longitudinal Child and Family Outcome Study** that used a combination of questionnaires and standardized instruments to investigate the following at six-month intervals: children's emotional and behavioral status, strengths, educational performance, criminal justice system involvement, living environments, caregiver strain, family functioning, service utilization, and child and family satisfaction with services.
- Development of **process measures** which were obtained from key informant interviews, focus groups, and surveys and which supplemented the national evaluation.



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PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

CHSR worked with the community to develop a [logic model](#) as an effective way to bring together diverse groups around a common goal – to organize their planning, implementation, and evaluation strategies. This process utilized the Theory of Change to help participants understand how the underlying assumptions and strategies that guide local system development are critical to producing changes in services and supports that are expected to lead to improvements for the community and its residents.