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Children's Department Awarded Federal Grant to Develop Child Mental Health Information for Families

WILMINGTON _The Delaware Children's Department has been awarded a \$300,000 grant by the Center of Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to help families become partners with the professionals planning for their children with mental health challenges and to improve function for the child for an easier transition into adulthood.

Cabinet Secretary Cari DeSantis says families in Delaware report that they need more information to better support their children experiencing mental illness, behavior disorders or substance abuse issues. This grant award will provide a new avenue to help families by improving access to quality information about mental health disorders and evidence-based, effective strategies for working with children, according to Secretary DeSantis.

Under the Real Choice Systems Change Mental Health System Transformation Grant, the Department will partner with the Delaware Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, Delaware Medicaid, and the University of Delaware's Center for Disabilities Studies during a three-year project to develop these easy-to-access set of materials designed to be helpful to children and families specifically in the area of children's mental health so they can be served in their communities and homes.

"At the Delaware Children's Department we think of the child first in all we do," Secretary DeSantis said. "We know children can be treated more effectively in home and community settings rather than restrictive institutional, residential treatment."

Family Federation President Tom Ragonese says the project was a family member-driven process and the partnership between family members and the State "shows how effective we are when we work together to increase resources in children's mental health." He adds that the family advocate group is "looking forward to working with our partners to create information that will really help families get and use effective treatment and strategies to keep their kids at home and avoid institutional treatment whenever possible."

On any given day, the Children's Department provides services to approximately 8,200 children who have been abused, neglected, are dependent, have mental health or substance problems, and/or have been adjudicated delinquent by the Courts. For more information, please visit <http://www.state.de.us/kids/>.

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