

# Helping Idaho families care for children with serious emotional disturbances.

**R**aising a child is not easy. If that child has a serious emotional disturbance (SED), every step toward adulthood can be an uphill climb. For a single parent or a family with little or no outside support, the climb can seem overwhelming. So it's not unusual for parents of children with SED to feel alone, helpless, and uncertain about which way to turn.

System of care members believe that by building on each other's strengths, children with SED

## What is a serious emotional disturbance (SED)?

SED includes a range of behavioral and emotional disorders severe enough to limit or interfere with a child's ability to function in the family, school, or community.

can lead happy, healthy, and productive lives. They also believe that to be successful care must be tailored to meet children's specific needs, and — most importantly — parents must be full partners in planning and deciding how that care is administered.



## Developing a system of care so parents need never feel alone.

In communities throughout Idaho, caring people are coming together to help children with SED and their families make every step in life's journey a little easier. This "system of care" is made up of individuals representing public and private organizations, such as mental health, education, business, juvenile justice, and parent-advocacy groups.

## Recognizing the need is the first step toward providing the right care.

A community system of care is a powerful tool for meeting the physical, emotional, social, and educational needs of a child with SED.

However, like any tool, it's of little value if it goes unused. Research indicates more than 17,000 children in Idaho live with a serious emotional disturbance, yet



less than half of these children receive help through public services. This difference exists because parents sometimes fail to recognize their child has a problem. Or if they suspect a problem, they may be reluctant to reach out for help for fear they will be blamed for their child's condition.

SED includes a range of emotional and behavioral disorders. Like physical diseases, they are most successfully treated when identified early. Early detection and treatment are not only in the best interest of the child, but beneficial to the parents, as well. Knowing your child is receiving appropriate care reduces anxiety and stress and frees parents to focus on other matters.

**A system of care is designed around children, families, and the community.**

The expression "it takes a village to raise a child" is especially true for children with SED. In Idaho communities with a system of care, parents develop a comprehensive plan that draws upon the services and support available in the area. Parents also select the people from the community who will assist with the plan's development and eventual execution. It's an approach that values parents and recognizes care is most

effective when it is comprehensive, local, and specific to the needs and strengths of the child.

Systems of care have been successful in communities across the nation. A recent study of 30 communities in other states

found the majority of caregivers were pleased with their child's progress after one year in a system of care. In fact, more than 75 percent rated services as "good" to "excellent." Other studies indicate that children in a system of care function better at home, in school, and in the community.

In short, it's an approach that works – for children, parents, and communities.

**For more information about the Idaho System of Care and the services and support available in your area, call the Idaho CareLine by dialing 211 or 1-800-926-2588.**

**You can also contact the Idaho Federation of Families, an Idaho-based support organization for families with children affected by SED, on the Web at [www.idffcmh.org](http://www.idffcmh.org) or by calling 208-433-8845.**

**What is a system of care?**  
Services and support coordinated to help parents of a child with SED develop an effective care plan – with the assistance of individuals chosen by the family – that is tailored to the needs of the child and locally administered.



BUILDING ON EACH OTHER'S STRENGTHS.