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Report from Commission on Children’s Behavioral Health Report Describes Dismal State of Affairs for Region’s Youth

ROCHESTER, N.Y., January 28, 2016 – The Commission on Children’s Behavioral Health in the Finger Lakes, convened by the Greater Rochester Health Foundation, presented its report on the current state of our region’s children’s behavioral health system. The report outlines recommended policy, practice, and funding changes that would address gaps and improve the state of children’s behavioral health services in the Greater Rochester region.

As part of this effort, the Health Foundation commissioned a study by the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the University of Rochester Medical Center. The study engaged researchers and clinical practitioners to examine the state of children’s behavioral health, addressed systems that reached children, and conducted interviews, focus groups, and data analysis.

Key findings included:

- In any given year, from 13-20% of children between the ages of two and 18 experience a mental disorder
- Only one in five of children will see a mental health provider of those children with a diagnosable behavioral health issue
- Prevention efforts are virtually nonexistent in regional child care settings, elementary and secondary schools, or community resource settings
- Access to care is highly problematic
- Quality of care is inconsistent and evidence-based interventions are not a routine part of clinical training or continuing education
- There is a shortage of practitioners trained to address the needs of children and adolescents
- A number of children in our region experience or witness trauma-inducing events and if left unaddressed, can prompt serious mental health and behavioral issues
- There is no established process for active coordination between organizations that serve children and adolescents

“This effort was initiated because of the consistent input we received from childcare providers, schools, pediatricians, and children’s mental health clinicians, all of whom expressed concern about the region’s children’s behavioral health system, its capacity, and in some cases, its quality,” said John Urban, president and CEO, Greater Rochester Health Foundation. “We are excited at the sound recommendations the group has proposed to address the startling gaps in our system.”

Implementing prevention strategies is one of the overarching recommendations that the Committee feels should take top priority. Additionally, there is a recommendation to form a Task Force to address issues outlined in the report, and to establish a local children's behavioral health advocacy effort.

The full report is available for download on the Greater Rochester Health Foundation's website, www.thegrhf.org.

About Greater Rochester Health Foundation:

The mission of Greater Rochester Health Foundation is to improve the health status of residents of the Greater Rochester community, including people whose unique health care needs have not been met because of race, ethnicity, or income. For more information, please visit www.thegrhf.org.

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