



Commission to focus on services for children with mental health issues

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To address shortfalls in area services for children with mental health issues, the Greater Rochester Health Foundation has organized a Commission on Children's Behavioral Health, officials said Thursday.

"The Health Foundation convened this commission based on consistent input ... 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," GRHF president and CEO John Urban said.

Former Rochester mayor Thomas Richards and former Rochester Business Alliance Inc. president and CEO Sandy Parker are serving as co-chairmen of the commission. It has pulled together a multidisciplinary team that is studying area services and resources.

Led by Michael Scharf M.D., University of Rochester Medical Center chief of child and adolescent psychiatry, the commission's team plans to issue a report in November recommending reforms needed to address the current system's gaps and shortfalls.

One in five children are troubled by serious behavioral or mental health issues. And while most people have some general awareness of the issue, those who need services may not know what help is available, Scharf said.

The commission hopes to see lawmakers adopt recommendations outlined in the November report, Parker said.

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