

National Evaluation of the Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program

Systems of Hope Program

Harris County, Texas Cultural and Linguistic Competence Implementation Study Report June 11–12, 2007

I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report summarizes information obtained from interviews and focus groups conducted with key informants from the Systems of Hope program in Harris County, Texas. The interviews and focus groups were conducted as part of the Cultural and Linguistic Competence Implementation Study (CLCIS), an exploratory study designed to examine how the cultural and linguistic needs of children and their families are being met within system of care communities. The report will describe the community's goals and strategies for implementing cultural and linguistic practices and efforts made to achieve these goals, according to the eight domains of inquiry outlined below and based on responses from key informants. This report will not provide specific recommendations about areas for improvement. However, the report can be used as a guide for communities engaged in self-assessing their efforts and for technical assistance purposes.

I. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The CLCIS is a substudy of the national evaluation of the Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program. It addresses the extent to which the cultural and linguistic characteristics of communities inform the implementation of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Managed Care Cultural and Linguistic Standards. The study involves a qualitative exploration of how four 2005-funded system of care communities are integrating the cultural and linguistic characteristics of their communities into their system of care implementation. This study uses an ethnographic approach that includes site visits and key informant interviews and focus groups.

Specifically, the study addresses these questions:

- What are each community's efforts to develop culturally and linguistically appropriate systems of care at the infrastructure and service delivery levels and what factors impact the implementation of cultural and linguistic competence (CLC) standards?
- What are the barriers and facilitators identified in the process and what efforts have been implemented to resolve barriers?
- What are consumers' and other respondents' perceptions of how these efforts meet the diverse cultural and linguistic needs of children, youth, and families?

The CLCIS is guided by eight key domains of inquiry:

- **Collaboration and Outreach:** System of care communities form partnerships that work collaboratively to plan and assess ways to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of consumers, align services, enhance communications, and include key stakeholders (in both formal and informal networks and resources).
- **Culturally Competent Practices/Interventions:** Systems of care engage in practices and support interventions that recognize, acknowledge, and strive to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of consumers and their families and implement ongoing self-assessments to determine their effectiveness.
- **Training and Workforce Development:** Ongoing training is provided to support the development of cultural competence of key stakeholders, and the assessment of the extent to which a diverse workforce of mental health professionals exists and/or efforts to recruit, retain, develop, and promote such a workforce at all levels of the organization are in place.
- **Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI):** CQI efforts include collaborative planning and organizational self-assessment to assess consumer needs, preferred ways of meeting identified needs, and consumer satisfaction with existing services and service outcomes. Systems of care engage continuously in self-assessment and utilize assessment findings to improve practices from infrastructure to service delivery.
- **Governance:** System of care governance structures operate in a culturally and linguistically competent manner and are representative of diverse consumers and their families.
- **Planning and Management:** The principles of CLC are integrated into system of care planning processes.
- **Policies and Procedures:** Systems of care have policies and procedures in place which support the implementation of culturally competent practices, from infrastructure to service delivery, and continue to assess their effectiveness.
- **Diverse populations:** Systems of care are designed and implemented to respond to the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersexed, two-spirit consumers, very young children, and other diverse groups.

B. SITE VISIT DETAILS

The Systems of Hope site visit was held June 11 and 12, 2007, in Houston, Texas. A team of two site visitors conducted the site visit at the Harris County Youth Services Center (YSC). The YSC functions as the central point for a wide range of support services for children and youth and houses various agencies to better coordinate services. For example, the YSC houses staff from Child Protective Services; Kinder Shelter, a 24-bed emergency shelter; Community Youth Services, a crisis intervention and case management program; The TRIAD Prevention Program, a consortium of three county agencies (Harris County Protective Services for Children and Adults, Harris County Juvenile Probation, and Mental Health/Mental Retardation Authority); Preparation for Adult Living, a program for transition age youth; BEAR, a resource for abused and neglected children; DePelchin Children's Center, a counseling center for children in the emergency shelter; and a medical and dental clinic.

Seven key informant interviews and two focus groups were conducted during the site visit, and a final debriefing was conducted with key staff. The interviews were conducted with the project director, cultural coordinator, youth coordinator, evaluation team, governance board member, and two family members. Two youth and a clinical director were scheduled to be interviewed but did not participate due to other unforeseen commitments. The focus groups were conducted with the service delivery staff and community leaders. Although up to four members of the Governance Board were scheduled for a focus group, only one member participated and thus, became a one-on-one interview. Interviews and focus groups lasted approximately 1 hour and all were held at the YSC. The site visitors were also given a tour of the YSC facility.

Each system of care community participating in the CLCIS was asked to organize a core CLC team for the study, consisting of community representatives such as the project director, cultural coordinator, evaluator, families, and youth. The Systems of Hope core CLC team consisted of the project director, cultural coordinator and the evaluation team. Conference calls were held with this team to determine appropriate respondents, review documents and coordinate the site visit.

II. SITE BACKGROUND AND INFORMATION

A. OVERALL MISSION AND GOAL OF THE PROGRAM

The overall mission of the Systems of Hope program is “to provide effective support and care which is family-driven and youth-guided to families and their children who are experiencing serious emotional and behavioral problems. The Harris County Systems of Hope will utilize integrated, holistic, and individualized methods based on strengths and an appreciation of the many cultures represented in our community.” The program is a network of services and supports that bring together families, children, youth, and partner agencies and organizations to meet the challenges of children and youth with serious emotional mental health needs and their families. The Systems of Hope program is in their second year of funding.

B. CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE GOALS AND STANDARDS

Staff from the Systems of Hope program are in the process of developing a Cultural and Linguistic Competence (CLC) Plan. Once developed, the plan will ensure that all of the services and strategies are implemented within the cultural and linguistic context of the children, youth and families served. The overarching goal of the CLC Plan is to “ensure that the system of care adopts a systemic, systematic, and strategic approach to increasing the cultural responsiveness of services and supports delivered to children, youth, and families, and a sensitivity and appreciation for diversity and cultural issues throughout the system of care.”

The Systems of Hope program’s CLC Plan will be guided by six critical domains which were developed from the national standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in health care offered by the Office of Minority Health.

- | Six Critical CLC Domains |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Governance and organizational structure• Services and supports• Planning and continuous quality improvement• Collaboration• Communication• Workforce development |

The plan will be structured in a way that promotes accountability at all levels. For example, specific tasks and action steps will be provided at the governance, administrative, practitioner and youth and family levels. According to the proposed plan, this concept promotes a team approach and invites everyone in the system of care to have a shared responsibility of working toward developing a culturally and linguistically competent system of care. The specific goals of the plan are to: (1) provide opportunities for families so that they can have culturally and linguistically appropriate services and can gain a better understanding of their culture; (2) transfer the knowledge to the agencies providing services to children, youth, and families and to the governing board; (3) provide ongoing training activities on CLC practices. The timeline calls for completion of the plan in Fall 2007.

The Cultural and Linguistic Competence Committee will serve as an advisory group to Systems of Hope staff who will be responsible for finalizing the CLC Plan. Systems of Hope currently has a cultural coordinator who organizes the committee and is the main point of contact for committee members. Though the committee is in the formative stages, it currently has representatives from various community-based organizations and agencies, including the Alliance for Multi-cultural Services, Asian American Family Services, Families Under Urban and Social Attack (FUUSA), Interfaith Ministries, Self-Help for African People Through Education (SHAPE), and Montrose Counseling Center (MCC). Members of these organizations represent different racial/ethnic groups, including African American, Asian, and Latino, as well as the GLBTQ community. The committee will also extend to Systems of Hope youth and families and from that, Systems of Hope to recruit diverse family members to serve on the governing board. In addition to serving as an advisory group for the development of the CLC Plan, the committee advises Systems of Hope on available traditional and non-traditional services within the community.

C. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITE

The Systems of Hope program is located in Houston, the largest city in Harris County. The program serves all of Harris County, which is comprised of approximately 1,178 square miles with a population of nearly 3.7 million. About 25 percent of the population is children between the ages of 0 and 18 years. Currently, there are close to 186,000 children and youth who have mental health problems residing in Harris County; the Systems of Hope program has targeted approximately 150,000 of these children and youth for services. The population of the county is largely white (63 percent), and the Hispanic population (of any race) is growing (38 percent). Compared to Harris County, there are more African-American children, youth, and families

enrolled in the Systems of Hope program (59 percent) than are in the population of the county (18 percent). (Refer to Table 1.)

**Table 1
Race and Ethnicity Distributions in the Systems of Hope Program and Harris County**

RACE/ETHNICITY	SYSTEMS OF HOPE*	HARRIS COUNTY**
Black/African American	58.5%	17.8%
Hispanic/Latino(of any race)	35.8%	37.8%
White	11.3%	62.7%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0%	.4%
Asian	0%	5.5%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0%	.1%
Other	15%	12.1%

Note: *N=53; **American Community Survey Data Profile Highlights, United States Census Bureau, 2005

There are about 100 ancestries reported and more than 70 different languages are spoken in Harris County. The refugee population, though a small percentage, consists of a growing Vietnamese, Cambodian, Southeast Asian, and East African population. About 200,000 victims of hurricanes Katrina and Rita from New Orleans and the Gulf Coast Region have settled in the county. Many immigrants arriving in the area have suffered from political oppression. Staff are becoming aware of the ramifications of political oppression from other countries and the presenting problems it brings to families who need and seek mental health services in the community. Because of political oppression and the fact that many of these immigrants lived in refugee camps, there is a high percentage of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) diagnosis among these families.

Families in Harris County come from diverse religious backgrounds, including, Protestant (57 percent), Catholic (36 percent), Muslim (3 percent) and Jewish (2 percent).

The eligibility requirements for enrollment into the Systems of Hope program include children and youth who are between the ages 6 to 16 (at the time of referral,) reside in Harris County, and have a mental health diagnosis or symptoms. Children and youth served must also have difficulties in two areas of life, and have an IQ of 70 or above, a previous episode of unsuccessful treatment, and risk factors for the youth in his/her family, or in his/her community. Currently, 53 families are enrolled in Systems of Hope; of those enrolled, 88 percent and 12 percent speak English and Spanish (respectively) as their primary language. More males than females are enrolled in the program (62 percent versus 37 percent). In terms of religious affiliation, families that have been served in Systems of Hope are primarily Protestant (61 percent) and Catholic (12 percent); another 27 percent represent other denominations or have missing information. The program targets 150 new enrollees per year.

The Systems of Hope service structure is centered on the wraparound planning process. Care teams consisting of care coordinators and parent partners meet with families and their children or youth to discuss strengths, challenges and service options. The information is compiled into an individualized plan of care. According to the program brochure, the plan of care is family-driven, youth-guided, respectful of the family's culture, language, and values, coordinated with community supports, and flexible. The care teams are located across different agencies including DePelchin Children's Center, Harris County Juvenile Probation, Harris County Protective Services for Children and Adults, Mental Health Mental Retardation Authority of Harris County, and City of Houston Department of Health and Human Services, which has allocated their care team to Key Middle School. Care teams are supervised by supervisory staff and a clinical director.

Aside from the care teams, other key staff include the youth coordinator, whose primary duty is to organize and manage a youth group that provides education and support for the youth served by Systems of Hope and designs youth program activities. The youth coordinator oversees the Youth Advisory Council, comprised of a group of youth who are active in the decision-making process about matters important to youth. The group provides recommendations on program matters to several subcommittees of the governing board and to the program, including important issues to consider for providing culturally and linguistically competent care. Members of the Youth Advisory Council also have attended national system of care conferences. Another key staff is the CLC and training coordinator. The CLC coordinator organizes and manages the cultural competence committee, oversees the development of the CLC Plan, interfaces with community-based organizations, and organizes all training activities for Systems of Hope staff. Additionally, the CLC coordinator provides consultation for care teams regarding Systems of Hope families and attends wraparound meetings upon request to ensure that cultural competence needs at the child and family level are being met. The management staff also includes a project director who oversees all aspects of the program. The Systems of Hope program has a very diverse staffing structure, including representatives from Greek, African American, Asian, Central American, South American, Caribbean, Filipino, White, and Israeli cultures. Altogether, about five languages are spoken by staff.

III. CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE DOMAINS EXAMINED

In order to examine the culturally and linguistically competent practices within the Systems of Hope program, protocols were developed for each key respondent and according to the eight main domains of inquiry. The development of the domains was guided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)'s managed care cultural and linguistic standards. The domains were refined further through multiple sources. Conference calls were held with the CLC Study Expert Panel, who advised the team on other sources for culturally and linguistically competent standards, such as the domains developed by the Technical Assistant Partnership's Cultural Competence Action Team. A literature review on other culturally and linguistically competent standards in mental health and other fields was conducted to support the development of the domains. The team also sought advice from community representatives who participated in the listening sessions at the 2007 Winter System of Care Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia.

Once finalized, protocol questions for each respondent were developed from the domains. The Systems of Hope core cultural and linguistic competence (CLC) team for this study reviewed the questions to determine its appropriateness for the community at large and for the key informants. The CLC core team also determined the appropriate format (e.g., interview or focus group) for each respondent. The interviews and focus groups were transcribed, analyzed thematically, and summarized.

A. COLLABORATION AND OUTREACH

Systems of Hope collaborate with several diverse agencies and organizations. Specifically, the program targets five major child-serving entities that represent a cross-section of the population in Harris County. They convene regularly with agency leaders and staff during governance board meetings. Systems of Hope partners with several community-based organizations to increase outreach to diverse populations (e.g., Hispanic/Latino, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Southeast Asian, Chinese) and to gain access to interpretation and translation services. They continue to grow their relationship with the Alliance for Multi-Cultural Services, a non-profit organization that works with refugees in Harris County. The organization has served more than 75,000 refugees, immigrants, and low-income individuals in the Houston area, and has staff that represent many countries and speak more than 45 languages. They also network with the Asian American Family Services of Houston, the only community-based, non-profit organization of its kind in the Southwest United States; Interfaith Ministries, Families Under Urban and Social Attack (FUUSA), Self-Help for African People through Education (S.H.A.P.E), the City of Houston Youth Council and other youth groups. Staff attend a variety of community functions in an effort to reach out to diverse organizations. For example, staff attend town hall meetings to identify gatekeepers of diverse communities. System of Hope has also utilized radio and television media to raise awareness about the program and to attract Hispanic and Latino consumers.

SUMMARY
<p>Efforts made toward implementing this domain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Systems of Hope program collaborates with various agencies and organizations and continues to seek out more agencies and organizations that serve diverse populations. • Staff are active in conducting outreach to community-based organizations serving diverse populations, including participating in town hall meetings and sending invitations to participate in governance and other program activities. <p>Challenges and barriers faced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff from agencies represented in the governance board do not reflect the diversity of the community. • Program materials need to be tailored to the diverse population served. • Because of the vast diversity of people residing in Harris County, reaching out to all populations has been a challenge.

Systems of Hope has made considerable strives engaging in collaboration and outreach although some challenges exist. Harris County is an extremely diverse community so implementing strategies to reach new populations, especially those not served by the program, will need to be ongoing. Also, there is a lack of diversity on the governance board, such as staff from agencies that do not represent the community being served. Currently, the board largely consists of white females. Finally, while many program materials are available to agencies for distribution, these materials need to be tailored so that they are appropriate for diverse audiences.

According to respondents, staff at Systems of Hope are committed to meeting the cultural and linguistic needs of the consumers. Respondents felt that the CLC Coordinator is doing an excellent job networking and building rapport with diverse community-based organizations and thereby gaining access to other populations. The youth coordinator is very dedicated to increasing youth participation in CLC efforts. Respondents felt that there need to be more of an authoritative voice (person with the power and authority to make decisions and effect change) that supports CLC and that Systems of Hope staff and their partners are held accountable in terms of their participation in CLC activities. One respondent indicated that although they have a Youth Advisory Council and all the subcommittees are open to youth, they lack meaningful opportunities for youth participation. A respondent commented that “one of the things that different agencies have to realize is how youth are very much available.” Another respondent expressed concern that they are not reaching out to populations not being served by the program, “I don’t think that we have any Indian families in our program. And I don’t know if that’s because of the way that their particular culture addresses getting mental health needs met or if it just happens to be that we haven’t had any referrals yet..”

Systems of Hope staff are making efforts to increase collaboration and outreach. For example, to increase diversity on the governance board they are reaching out to Systems of Hope families who may be interested in participating. Existing governing board family members are working on developing an orientation for families who join the board. The membership subcommittee is working with in developing a CLC Plan that will formalize the recruitment process. In addition, Systems of Hope plan to measure collaboration with diverse organizations with a collaborative function scale, an interagency collaboration scale, and a Web-based cultural competency self-assessment, which will be administered to the five child-serving agencies and to individual practitioners of the wraparound teams.

B. CULTURALLY COMPETENT PRACTICES AND INTERVENTION

Systems of Hope is in the process of developing culturally competent practices and interventions and is moving in that direction. The CLC Coordinator makes an effort to educate staff about culturally appropriate communication and new staff must participate in the diversity training. Care teams conduct a strengths and discovery process with the families. During this process, care teams find out about the family’s culture and beliefs. This knowledge helps inform their wraparound plan and the makeup of the family’s wraparound team.

Respondents indicated that staff do their best to work with the belief systems of the diverse group of people they serve. During wraparound meetings, families and youth are asked about their cultural beliefs. When available, staff offer non-traditional services to those who request it. For example, staff have visited Buddhist temples with families and folk healers have been made available to families. Staff encourage families and youth to include people important to them, such as clergy or other close family members to participate in their wraparound team meetings. Staff connect families and youth with different

SUMMARY
<p>Efforts made toward implementing this domain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems of Hope care teams engage families and youth in a strengths and discovery process where an assessment of the family’s culture is conducted. • When available, non-traditional services such as cultural healing are offered. <p>Challenges and barriers faced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some respondents do not see the benefits of implementing evidence-based treatments because of the extreme diversity of the community and the complexity of adapting an EBP to fit all participants.

types of therapies and recreational activities offered within the community and use flexible funds to access more non-traditional services. According to respondents, a wraparound satisfaction survey is given to all participants at every wraparound team meeting, including the families, youth, professionals, and natural supports. These surveys are placed in a sealed envelope and given to the evaluation team. As the surveys ask specifically about respect shown to family customs, values, and beliefs, staff indicate that this is one way to receive feedback about how culturally competent their practices have been.

When requested by the family, attempts are made to pair families with care team providers having a similar cultural or ethnic background. However, according to respondents, it is not always possible due to large caseloads. Some respondents indicated that language can sometimes be a barrier, even when working with a family member who speaks English. One respondent indicated that, “There’s been, for example, one family that the mom that we’re working with does speak English, but everyone else in her household speaks Spanish. So if we call and need to leave a message it’s difficult.” Respondents mentioned that interpretation services are always available when working with non-English speaking consumers.

Apart from the strengths and discovery process and connecting families to community events, respondents indicated the only formal practices and support interventions currently in place are monthly Family Enrichment and monthly Parent Education Group. According to one respondent, Systems of Hope does not plan on implementing evidence-based practices because they do not see how this would benefit an extremely diverse community like Harris County. The concern is that it would be extremely costly to develop and implement evidence-based treatments to fit the needs of so many diverse groups. Therefore, they would have to make a decision about which group would receive this intervention and, in the process, alienate others.

C. TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Systems of Hope has developed some initial training activities for staff around cultural competency, however they are limited in scope and are not mandatory. Training opportunities exist in terms of cultural awareness luncheons such as the Hispanic Awareness, Asian American, and African American luncheons. There is one formalized training related to CLC known as the diversity training or Cultural Competence 101. This training is mandatory for all new staff and provides an overview of CLC and how it relates to systems of care. However, it is a one-time training activity. The governance board meetings include a cultural awareness segment which includes presentations on culturally specific issues. These are conducted by staff, community members, and agency representatives who are invited to share information about their culture. Also, staff receives

SUMMARY
<p>Efforts made toward implementing this domain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CLC training is offered in the form of cultural awareness luncheons which include presentations on various cultural and ethnic groups. ● Staff are made aware of other training activities provided in the community. ● The program offers mandatory diversity training to staff when they are first hired. ● The program is committed to recruiting and hiring staff that reflect the diversity of the community. <p>Challenges and barriers faced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training activities on CLC are few, limited in scope, and not mandatory. ● Diversity training activities are not currently evaluated and therefore their effectiveness cannot be determined.

e-mails about trainings and other activities related to CLC in Harris County.

There are several challenges around CLC training. There is no set budget for training related to CLC. Trainings are not mandatory and they are not evaluated currently, so it unclear how successful they are, how satisfied people are with them, or how they might be improved. It is also unclear what role the CLC Coordinator plays in workforce development.

Respondents spoke highly about the cultural moments on the governance board meeting agendas; however, they would prefer an expanded version. Currently, the cultural moments are limited to about 15 – 20 minutes, which has offended some presenters who are asked to share information about their culture.

In terms of workforce development, the program has committed to recruiting and hiring staff who reflect the diversity of the community. The care team staff represent about 10 cultures and ethnicities and speak about five languages. However, respondents indicated that because the majority of children and youths served are male, they would like to see more efforts toward recruiting and hiring male providers. Also, training activities and policies should reflect workforce development issues such as understanding the role of staff and how to better develop their skills.

In general, respondents did not feel like there are enough training opportunities. Several respondents noted that trainings on the culture of poverty and working with gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) populations would be beneficial. One respondent commented, "...That would be really helpful for us to learn to work with people, not only of cultural backgrounds, but different economic backgrounds." Another respondent felt strongly that training activities should involve field trips to experience cultures first-hand. "There's a street down here called Harwin and within 6 blocks you can visit 12 different cultures." Respondents also expressed interest in training on self exploration of one's own culture, although not everyone understood why this would be meaningful. In terms of staff availability for trainings, one respondent felt that there are too many meetings to attend and that this can be a problem, "...We have so many taskforce and subcommittees and this is so much...Like it has gotten better, but we have a month on average 10 or 15 meetings."

D. CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

In terms of evaluation and quality monitoring, many respondents mentioned that the evaluation team is doing an excellent job gathering data on areas related to CLC. They have developed several instruments and are assessing collaboration and interagency cultural self assessments. They are fine-tuning a cultural and linguistic self-assessment and working on an organizational self assessment to administer to staff.

The evaluation team created a wraparound satisfaction survey, which care teams administer after each wraparound meeting to all participants. Results from the survey indicated that 95 percent of

the respondents perceived that their care team acted in a respectful manner towards the family’s culture and they understood the discussion during the meeting. One concern that emerged from this survey was wraparound team membership; several respondents indicated that the people that they wanted on their wraparound team were not present. Also, there has been input from other members of the team when developing and selecting protocols. The CLC Coordinator has assisted with the development of the wraparound satisfaction surveys by reviewing the language concerning CLC-related items. Also, the evaluation team and CLC Coordinator developed a cultural awareness moment survey, which was distributed at a governance board meeting. On a more basic level, they are also participating in a CQI process implemented by the county protective services, which requires that they take their training classes and that they have bilingual and a diverse staff.

While Systems of Hope is doing an excellent job gathering data such as a cultural competence self-assessment and an organizational self assessment that will be administered to staff, several gaps exist. Respondents indicated that they would be interested in doing assessments of which cultures are not represented in the Systems of Hope program and why they’re not represented considering that such different groups exist in the community. Thus far, there have been no assessments of the trainings, policies or procedures about culturally competent practices or documentation on the needs of the GLBTQ population. Also, there has been no assessment on the differential needs of other populations, including those of lower socio-economic status.

SUMMARY
<p>Efforts made toward implementing this domain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The evaluation staff have developed several instruments that assess the overall practices of the program, including CLC issues.• The evaluation staff are engaged in developing cultural and linguistic self-assessments and other CQI process. <p>Challenges and barriers faced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The evaluation process does not include an assessment of training activities, policies and procedures related to CLC and the needs of diverse populations.

E. GOVERNANCE

The Systems of Hope governance board is comprised of nearly 50 people, half of whom are family members and the other half are representatives from agencies and organizations in the community. Of the 50 members, about 38 have voting rights. The board membership is largely White and is not proportionally representative of the cultural and ethnic diversity of Harris County. According to respondents, the board is the least avenue of support toward the implementation of culturally and linguistically competent practices. One respondent indicated that “There’s one African American woman and one Hispanic woman who don’t come very often. So when you think, we’re a community of [nearly] 40% Hispanic and a community where African Americans are over-represented in every serving entity in this town (juvenile probation, DFPS, CPS, Mental Health, Criminal Justice), then those voices are not being heard.”

SUMMARY
<p>Efforts made toward implementing this domain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Cultural Awareness Moments” presentations have increased awareness among governance members on diverse groups residing in Harris County. <p>Challenges and barriers faced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The governing board membership currently does not reflect the diversity of the community, though there are strategies to increase diversity.

A subcommittee of the board determines membership. Initially, membership was open for anyone with interest, but attendance was not consistent. After bylaws were established in December 2006, it was determined that missing three consecutive meetings would result in dismissal from the board if an adequate reason was not provided. According to respondents, this new rule should provide an opportunity to bring more culturally diverse members to the board.

Youth participation on the governance board is somewhat limited. Although youth provide recommendations to board members on youth issues, it was unclear to respondents the extent of their participation. Family representation on the board is limited to those who are not direct recipients of services. Respondents indicated that one attempt to diversify board membership will be to recruit families who are receiving services in the system. Members are planning also a big recruitment effort from agencies serving diverse populations. Respondents indicated that the combination of recruiting families who are being served by the program and agencies should bring more diversity to the board. The bylaws also indicated that governance members may serve up to 2 years and may serve two consecutive terms. This will also provide opportunities to fill vacancies with more diverse members.

Although the governance board approves the program’s budget, no effort has been made to include items specifically to implement culturally and linguistically competent practices. According to respondents, on occasion, the board is asked to determine how to spend extra funds. Recently, the board debated about whether to spend extra funds on evidence-based practices.

The governance board has a recurring agenda item called “Cultural Awareness Moments.” Cultural moments are the program’s effort toward increasing awareness on issues related to culture and coordinated by the cultural coordinator. Governance board meetings begin with this 15–20 minute presentation on specific cultural or ethnic groups or activities. The presentations

have been conducted by Systems of Hope staff, agency staff, and community members, and presented in a variety of formats including videos, PowerPoint slides and demonstrations.

In an effort to assess the effectiveness of the cultural awareness moments, the evaluation staff developed a survey which assessed satisfaction and perceptions of the activity; 32 governing board members completed the survey. Overall, respondents expressed satisfaction with the cultural moments; more than 90 percent thought it was a positive addition to the board meetings and agreed that it had increased their knowledge about other cultures. However, only about one-third (38 percent) of respondents had received diversity training in the past year or longer. Board members indicated their awareness of the lack of diversity and “knowledge does not equal cultural competence.” Although the majority of board members agreed that it was a nice addition to the meetings, some indicated that the cultural moments were “sometimes to the detriment of qualified employees” and that the amount of time allocated to this discussion somehow minimizes the importance of it.

F. PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

Systems of Hope program staff are working on developing several plans, including a strategic plan, CLC Plan, and a social marketing plan, all of which will inform the implementation of culturally and linguistically competent practices. To date, the logic model is the only plan in place. A guiding principle of the logic model is the provision of culturally and linguistically competent practices, and the mission of the program asserts an appreciation of the many cultures represented in the community.

A major accomplishment by Systems of Hope evaluation staff has been to develop an organizational cultural competence self-assessment plan. The staff are revising the plan based on decisions made about the strategic plan. The self-assessment plan follows the recommendations of the CLAS standards and includes versions for agency directors (or his/her designees), line staff, and Human Resources/Quality Improvement staff. According to respondents, the lack of the completion of the strategic plan has stalled the self-assessment process. However, because a self-assessment plan has been developed, it is expected that self assessments will be completed this year and administered annually.

The CLC Plan will be guided by the CLAS Standards. According to respondents, everyone will be responsible for infusing the CLC Plan into the Systems of Hope program. The cultural coordinator is working with multiple agencies and community leaders to finalize the plan. According to respondents, one of the critical pieces to completing the plan is to encourage buy-in from everyone involved in the systems of care, which has presented challenges for some staff. One respondent indicated, “I think that it’s beautiful if our staff, the Systems of Hope staff [can

SUMMARY
<p>Efforts made toward implementing this domain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program staff has developed a logic model which has the provision of culturally and linguistically competent practices as one of the guiding principles. • The program has developed an organizational cultural competence self-assessment plan. <p>Challenges and barriers faced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CLC Plan has yet to be developed. The staff is drafting of the plan and has recruited involvement from various agencies, but indicate that lack of community buy-in has been a barrier to completing the draft. • There is no line item budget for implementation of culturally and linguistically competent practices.

be] culturally competent. But I think it’s meaningless if we have people that sit around the table every day and they don’t incorporate some of these same principles.”

There is no specific line item budget for implementing culturally and linguistically competent practices. The program has a general training budget through which most of the culturally and linguistically competent training activities are funded. According to respondents, the monies available for funding activities related to CLC are made available by shifting funds in the general budget. One respondent indicated that “I think it’s important and I think it says something when it’s identified [CLC activities] as an individual line item instead of something like broad.”

The staff continue to meet regularly to put these pieces together. The actions steps listed for advancing culturally and linguistically competent practices include:

- Increasing leadership
- Being proactive with cultural- and linguistic-related matters
- Conducting systems-level organizational cultural competence self-assessments
- Completing the strategic plan
- Continuing educational opportunities

G. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Systems of Hope program examines the needs of its target population to develop policies and procedures that support the implementation of CLC. For example, an assessment of the difficulties and challenges with respect to discrimination and prejudice faced by those served in the program is conducted. Also, families and youth are asked about the importance of adding non-traditional services to their plan of care. Respondents indicate that the policies and procedures stress the importance of understanding not only the needs of families and youth served, but understanding their cultural background.

SUMMARY
<p>Efforts made toward implementing this domain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and procedures on providing culturally and linguistically competent care are provided mainly through training activities. <p>Challenges and barriers faced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are not aware of specific policies and procedures about providing culturally and linguistically competent care. • The policies and procedures manual for staff includes a general statement on CLC.

Some respondents admit that these policies and procedures are just beginning to be framed and most policies on CLC are provided through training activities, but not written down in a manual. The program has a general policies and procedures manual, but it only includes a very general statement about the importance of providing culturally and linguistically competent practices and that program staff should support it. One of the biggest obstacles is trying to get the appropriate staff hired. However, the program is trying to increase its collaborative activities with agencies that serve diverse populations and hoping that this collaboration will help refine some of their policies. In addition, the program has sought advice from the youth advisory council, which provide recommendations about culturally sensitive issues.

When asked whether the program has policies and procedures that support the implementation of CLC, many respondents were not aware of it. The evaluation staff is planning on assessing how

the policies and procedures of the Systems of Hope program, as well as their partner agencies and organizations, support culturally and linguistically competent practices.

H. DIVERSE POPULATIONS

According to respondents, Harris County has a very large gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) population. However, many respondents admit that very little (if any) effort has been made to identify this population and serve their needs. Respondents are aware of certain neighborhoods with a high concentration of this population, and some indicate that they are just beginning to form a relationship with one organization serving this group, the Montrose Counseling Center. The program staff indicate that there are plans to engage this community with the hope that more members of this group with mental health needs will be identified.

SUMMARY
<p>Efforts made toward implementing this domain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program staff are just beginning to form a relationship with an organization that serves primarily the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender population. Collaboration with this organization will foster the identification of families and youth that have mental health service needs. <p>Challenges and barriers faced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are minimal efforts to identify uniquely diverse populations and assess their service needs. • There are no training activities which focus on working with uniquely diverse population.

There are no specific outreach activities to other uniquely diverse populations. The target age group for the program starts at 6 years old and, therefore, no efforts have been made to identify the needs of very young children. There are plans to assess served client perceptions of the linguistic competency of providers who serve individuals who are not native speakers or those with low literacy levels. In addition, the program has not assessed the culture of poverty and the differential needs of poor families and youth, other than what is included in the national evaluation instruments. However, the program is looking into examining the needs of this population.

Respondents mentioned that although most of their clientele do not represent these diverse groups of people, they would benefit from training activities dedicated toward working with these groups. One respondent indicated, “We have a family who the mother was a lesbian and her partner was living with them and the kids. Me personally, I don’t really know how to address that situation.” They anticipate that once the program expands into the general community, there will be an increase of clients from many cultures.

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Systems of Hope program has made many efforts toward implementing culturally and linguistically competent practices during the 2 years of its funding. The program staff have formed strong relationships with community-based organizations that work with diverse populations, and continue to seek out other organizations and agencies that would support their cultural and linguistic competence (CLC) implementation efforts. Many respondents indicated that having a strong collaboration with community-based organizations is the key to effective implementation of culturally and linguistically competent practices. Through collaboration with these organizations, the staff will be able to identify cultural and ethnic groups that need services but are difficult to reach, discover more non-traditional services and more appropriate ways to engage families and youth from different cultures, and acquire knowledge about different cultures.

The program has recruited and hired a diverse workforce that serves the unique needs of the children, youth, and families residing in Harris County, a mostly urban metropolis with a vast number of cultures, languages, and ethnicities represented. The staff conduct a strengths and discovery process that assesses the cultural background of those served and provides service options based on the families needs and wants. Staff learn about new cultures through presentations at staff luncheons and have access to a list of training activities offered within the community. The service structure is guided by a logic model which includes the provision of culturally and linguistically competent practices as a guiding principle.

The evaluation staff has made tremendous strides toward assessing the program's effort to implement culturally and linguistically competent practices. Several instruments to assess collaboration and cultural self-assessments have been developed. The team administers the Collaboration Functioning Scale to governing board members, the Interagency Collaboration Scale to agency executives, and the Wraparound Assessment package to a sample of families and wraparound team members that includes the Wraparound Fidelity Index. The team is also working on other continuous quality improvement processes. The evaluation plan includes assessments at the system and organizational levels. The evaluation staff is working closely with the cultural coordinator to develop other appropriate assessments related to CLC.

Although the program has made strides toward providing more culturally relevant and appropriate services, according to respondents, additional efforts are needed. First, the CLC Plan has yet to be developed. The plan will ensure that services are implemented with the cultural and linguistic context of the children, youth, and families targeted for services. Second, there are no formalized training activities on CLC. There is only one diversity training offered when staff are first hired and other training activities are not mandatory. The optional training activities are not assessed, so effectiveness cannot be determined. Third, there are no formalized policies and procedures on culturally and linguistically competent practices. Staff are aware of policies through some training activities and regular communication with management. Fourth, the governing board lacks the diversity that is represented by the community. Respondents indicate that this is the least avenue of support toward implementation of cultural and linguistic practices. Lastly, there are minimal efforts to target uniquely diverse populations such as the GLBTQ

population. Respondents indicated that more training on working with these populations are needed.

There are a few challenges toward advancing CLC:

- Lack of diversity in the governing board
- Lack of prioritizing CLC
- The vast diversity within Harris County.

Many respondents indicated that these challenges have hindered their progress in this area, but are working toward overcoming them. There is awareness about the lack of diversity in the governance board among program staff and governance members, and there are strategies to increase diversity. The staff is working toward increasing buy-in from partner agencies, organizations and providers on setting the agenda for providing culturally and linguistically competent practices. The program staff is aware that the diversity of Harris County presents a challenge; however, building strong partnerships and relationships with community organizations will help them target the appropriate groups of people needing services. When asked whether Systems of Hope is meeting their goals and priorities related to CLC, one respondent indicated, “I think Systems of Hope is a work in progress. I think that when I look at projects around the County, and I look at a lot of them, they probably have the most diversity within their staff. And I think that they are making the most conscious efforts to be culturally and linguistically aware.”