

## **CASSP Principles**

CASSP (Child and Adolescent Service System Program) is based on a well-defined set of principles for mental health services for children and adolescents with or at risk of developing severe emotional disorders and their families. These principles are summarized in six core statements.

### **Child (Youth)-centered**

Services are planned to meet the individual needs of the young person, rather than to fit the young person into an existing service. Services consider the young person's family and community contexts, are developmentally appropriate and youth-specific and build on the strengths of the young person and their families to meet the mental health, social and physical needs of the young person.

### **Family-focused**

The family is the primary support system for the young person and it is important to help empower the family to advocate for themselves. The family participates as a full partner in all stages of the decision-making and treatment planning process including implementation, monitoring and evaluation. A family may include biological, adoptive and foster parents, siblings, grandparents, other relatives, and other adults who are committed to the young person. The development of mental health policy at state and local levels includes family representation.

### **Community-based**

Whenever possible, services are delivered in the young person's home community, drawing on formal and informal resources to promote the young person's successful participation in the community. Community resources include not only mental health professionals and provider agencies, but also social, religious, cultural organizations and other natural community support networks.

### **Multi-system**

Services are planned in collaboration with all the child/youth-serving systems involved in the young person's life. Representatives from all these systems and the family collaborate to define the goals for the young person, develop a service plan, develop the necessary resources to implement the plan, provide appropriate support to the young person and their family, and evaluate progress.

### **Culturally competent**

Culture determines our worldview and provides a general design for living and patterns for interpreting reality that are reflected in our behavior. Therefore, services that are culturally competent are provided by individuals who have the skills to recognize and respect the behavior, ideas, attitudes, values, beliefs, customs, language, rituals, ceremonies and practices characteristic of a particular group of people.

### **Least restrictive/least intrusive**

Services take place in settings that are the most appropriate and natural for youth and families and are the least restrictive and intrusive available to meet the needs of youth and families.