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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 30, 2020

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OKLAHOMA TASK FORCE ON TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE RELEASES STRATEGY REPORT FOCUSING ON A COORDINATED APPROACH TO PREVENT TRAUMA

TULSA-OK - As mandated in Senate Bill 1517, the Oklahoma Task Force on Trauma-Informed Care (TIC-TF) released its strategy report which highlights a structure that will allow Oklahomans to better coordinate services and implement best practices for the prevention and intervention of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in Oklahoma.

The senate bill was co-authored by Representative Carol Bush during the 2018 Legislative Session and came into effect on November 1, 2018. The bill was prompted by the stunning fact that 28% of Oklahoma children experienced two or more adverse childhood experiences.

"The number of children experiencing multiple ACEs is increasing as a result of the coronavirus pandemic so the time to act is now," said Carol Bush, State Representative for Oklahoma's District 70. "Research shows that more than half of Oklahoma's children have already experienced at least one adverse childhood experience, and many will experience more before reaching adulthood. Children who experience ACEs are at a higher risk for behavioral and health related problems as adults - including chronic disease, mental illness, work issues such as absenteeism, and time served in prison."

"It is time for a state-wide, inter-disciplinary system of care to address the issues and grow healthy Oklahoma children," Bush added.

Decades of research on adverse childhood experiences has repeatedly shown that traumatic events are related to disrupted development resulting in increased health problems, risky behaviors, and cognitive and socioemotional issues. As a result, the TIC-TF has been keenly focused on improving Oklahoma's response to these challenges and tuned its focus to strategize effective trauma-informed prevention and intervention efforts aimed at buffering the effects of adversity in both children and adults.

The TIC-TF strategy report identified sustainable strategies to support and expand both local and statewide initiatives that reduce children's exposure to adversity and increase opportunities for resilience throughout the state. Dubbed as Oklahoma's Coordinated Approach to Prevent Trauma, the task force identified a means to provide resources by utilizing an existing coordinating structure.

"Oklahoma has a rich history of implementing evidence-based programs and efforts that support children and families. Over the years though, sustaining the work has been a challenge – particularly in the rural parts of the state," said Annette Wisk Jacobi, Co-Chair of the Task Force for Trauma-Informed Care and Director of the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth. "The task force has worked to develop a structure, utilizing existing public-private collaborations, to assist with coordination, implementation, evaluation, and funding."

"The goal is to maximize resources, assure that quality services are available, and duplication does not occur," Jacobi added.

The task force recommended to utilize Oklahoma's System of Cares State Advisory Team (SAT) and its working arm, the Children's State Advisory Workgroup (CSAW) to provide an existing structure and central base to advance the work of preventing and mitigating trauma in Oklahoma. Each team is filled with public and private professionals with the skills necessary to gather and share information about trauma-informed care, encourage interagency coordination, and can

promote greater efficiency in the establishment of trauma-informed care practices. The task force noted that the collaboration between these workgroups and local communities will allow for government transparency and funding opportunities which might have been unavailable to one group alone.

In addition to utilizing CSAW and SAT, the task force recommended the creation of a Trauma-Informed Practices Work Group responsible for leading the work in trauma-informed care. The new workgroup will consist of the current members of the Task Force on the Trauma-Informed Care Coordination Subcommittee and will work directly with a cross-systems coordinator dedicated to a CSAW project entitled Project 180. The cross-systems coordinator position will be led by OSU Center for Integrative Research on Childhood Adversity (CIRCA) and will be responsible for overall project management for the implementation of a more trauma-informed system.

“As the only federally funded research center on ACEs, the Center for Integrative Research on Childhood Adversity brings a wealth of knowledge and resources to the statewide initiative to reduce the effects of ACEs on individuals, families, and communities,” said Dr. Jennifer Hays-Grudo, Co-Chair of the Task Force for Trauma-Informed Care and Director of CIRCA. “We’re delighted to be a part of the public-private partnerships involved in implementing a more trauma-informed system within Oklahoma.”

The TIC-TF forecasts that a trauma-informed approach can be effectively integrated into established agencies, programs, and organizations working directly with families and children. It notes that what has been lacking is a statewide systematic and intentional approach to create opportunities for recovery from trauma and foster resilience in all corners of the state, particularly in rural and difficult to reach communities. By transitioning its efforts to the CSAW and the SAT, it will create a stronger network of public-private partnerships that will best serve the citizens of Oklahoma.

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Additional Information:

Project 180 is a CSAW initiative aimed at improving outcomes and meeting the needs of children and families across our state. Using a cohort of 180 children who had interacted with many of the state agencies, the group identified barriers, bright spots, and opportunities to best serve children and families with complex needs. Several ideas resonated with the participants of that meeting, not the least of which was to involve more partners in the work of improving well-being across our systems. The 180 children now represent a rallying call across child and family-serving agencies in Oklahoma.

The CSAW is a research arm of the State Advisory Team and its primary focus is to research options for developing the needed infrastructure and services for Systems of Care. CSAW also serves as a work group of the Partnership Board. The Partnership Board members consist of the commissioners and directors of the child serving state agencies alongside the directors of the Oklahoma Family Network, and NAMI Oklahoma, family members, youth, and young adults.

The purpose of SAT is to improve the lives of children and families while upholding the values and principles of Systems of Care and to guide the development of the Systems of Care Process throughout the state of Oklahoma. This involves the cooperation of everyone who has a role serving a child with an emotional or behavioral health need, including family members, advocates, educators, mental health workers, social services, health services, the juvenile justice system, and community and recreational agencies.

Download a copy of the Task Force on Trauma-Informed Care Strategy Report at:

<https://www.ok.gov/occy/documents/TIC-TF%20Paper%202020-web%20version.pdf>