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Easterseals UCP CARES Program Recognized with 2019 Innovation Award for Quality Commitment

Pinehurst, NC (December 5, 2019). There is a current gap in our system between engaging and successfully linking individuals to services following a mental health crisis and individuals continuing to utilize crisis services to help manage these stressful events. In February 2017, Easterseals UCP engaged in multiple discussions with individuals and with local crisis centers to identify common themes and barriers to create an innovative, effective and supportive intervention for children and families experiencing frequent crisis events. Community Assessment and Response to Expedite Services (C.A.R.E.S) pilot was created to reduce those barriers in order to assist with linking youth and families quickly to clinically appropriate services following a crisis event by offering community-based after-hours assessments and referral and successful linkage to services.

CARES has demonstrated innovation through ongoing commitment to provide meaningful and supportive interventions and clinical support to assist with engaging disenfranchised populations. CARES ensures access to quality clinical services that meet families' needs in their communities with a tailored supportive approach that maximizes the youth and family voice. Developing meaningful partnerships and with key community partners to work collaboratively to engage specific target populations that historically have not had access to traditional mental health services due to a variety of barriers has been integral to project success. The CARES project is based on the needs of the families and provides flexibility in how, when and where services are delivered and supports are provided. The program responds based on individual family needs, whether that is coming out to meet children in the crisis center, after hours or on weekends in the home, community or office setting to accommodate families' schedules/needs. Their approach

includes family empowerment through education of diagnoses, treatment recommendations, case management and system navigation from time of assessment to intake.

Families reported that they felt heard and informed throughout the process and empowered through education and support offered through CARES assessors. Families that were linked to services had higher engagement in services and were less likely to have another crisis episode following 90 days of treatment. Alliance School Based Care Coordination (SBCC) program partners with the CARES project to provide seamless continuity of care to support families in accessing the appropriate level of care with a focus on a whole person-centered care approach. This partnership connects Wake County Peer Support Specialists (WCPSS), families, and SBCC to improve services and address school safety and School Based Mental Health strategic planning demonstrating a strong commitment to quality care.

About i2i Center for Integrative Health

The mission of the i2i Center is to foster collaborative and evidence-based initiatives for improving the quality and efficacy of the behavioral health, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and substance use care and support services systems within a comprehensive system of whole person care. The i2i Center accomplishes its mission by convening stakeholders, strategizing solutions, and activating change.