

Palm Beach County Community of Practice for Pediatric Integrated Care

Purpose

To advance integrated pediatric care in Palm Beach County and contribute to Florida-wide efforts, a physician-directed Community of Practice includes critical stakeholders (including parents) to develop a best practice model of primary and behavioral health care, incorporating promotion of social-emotional development and identification of developmental and behavioral health challenges with a focus on social determinants of health. Through this local Community of Practice, we will develop a standard model of care and connect with pediatricians and efforts across the state to learn from them and ultimately make integrated care the norm statewide.

Objectives

The **Pediatric Integrated Care Community of Practice Project** (PIC) strives to:

- 1) cultivate creative solutions to system barriers faced by the physicians implementing integrated care activities and
- 2) design a model of care that is adaptable to pediatric office practices across the continuum.

Core Partners

The Community of Practice currently includes the following core partners:

Pediatric Partners

Palm Beach County Pediatric Society

Palm Beach Pediatrics*

Pediatric Partners*

Children's Medical Services

Health Partners

Florida Department of Health

University Partners

Florida Atlantic University

Behavioral Health/Nonprofit Partners

BeWellPBC

Center for Child Counseling

Florida Mental Health Advocacy Coalition

Mental Health America of Palm Beach County

Palm Health Foundation

Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network

Community Partners

Parent Advisory Council

The Need

The demand for behavioral health support for children and youth is greater today than ever, with pediatricians and PCPs serving as an essential first line of defense for prevention and intervention. Studies show that 75% of children under age 18 present to primary care for psychiatric care needs, and 50% of primary care visits are related to psychosocial, emotional, and behavioral concerns. Understanding that Palm Beach County must work differently to avoid a siloed and overstressed care system, the Community of Practice is answering the call for change so that children and their families can receive the best possible behavioral health care and remove the access obstacles they face. This project will ignite actual systemic change and address the barriers that have long prevented pediatricians from practicing integrated care.

Why Now?

In July 2020, the State of Florida passed House Bill (HB) 945 [FLsenate.gov/HB945](https://www.flsenate.gov/legislation/bills/2020/945) mandating a planning process that promotes the development and effective implementation of a coordinated care system for children and youth, including integrated service delivery approaches that facilitate access to care. As the managing entity, Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network took the lead in this process for Palm Beach County. Palm Health Foundation assisted by commissioning statewide experts and psychologists Dr. David Shern and Dr. Mary Armstrong to study the local system. Their resulting report, *Achieving Greater Impact from the System of Care: Opportunities and Challenges*, recommended that "leaders in behavioral health should explore alternative models to better support pediatricians'

ability to assess and appropriately treat the behavioral health needs of children and youth.” The study acknowledged that:

- Pediatricians and other primary care physicians are finding themselves at the forefront of early screening, identification, intervention, and ongoing follow-up as mental health needs increase among youth and shortages for clinicians and psychiatrists are widespread.
- Additional barriers include lack of training for pediatricians to provide mental health care, inadequate funding to support integrated care, and a deficiency of warm handoffs between primary care doctors and service providers.

***Existing Models of Pediatric Integrated Care in Palm Beach County**

In Palm Beach County, two pediatrician practices exemplify aspects of the continuum of integrated pediatric care and help to highlight barriers to providing ample behavioral health support to youth and families in the county. Drawing from their knowledge and lessons learned, Dr. Shannon Fox-Levine of Palm Beach Pediatrics and Dr. Tommy Schectman of Pediatric Partners are serving as pilot sites in this initiative to share their experiences with participating pediatricians in developing a local standard of care. This pilot project can be scalable to guide a group of collaborative partners to expand and strengthen integrated care efforts in the county.

Project Scope: An Invitation to Design a Standard of Care

Utilizing the two pilot sites as a jumping-off point, the **Pediatric Integrated Care Community of Practice Project** partners will explore the following in two phases as they work together to design a standard of care:

- **Phase I** of the project includes supporting Palm Beach Pediatrics and Pediatric Partners to identify opportunities and challenges for their practices, address specific systemic barriers to integrated care, and document a standard for care that is scalable for other practices to follow.
 - **Policy:** Reach out to AHCA to discuss Medicaid code and reimbursement issues. Identify existing state policies and practices that prevent integrated care. Offer policy recommendations at local and state level.
 - **Learning and Evaluation:** Utilize researchers with our core university partner, Florida Atlantic University, to deep dive into the critical element questions, examining existing models and studying educational resources about integrated care.
 - **Community Partnership:** Build parent/family advisory group to inform the implementation of pediatric integrated care.
 - **Documentation:** Develop a comprehensive report and guide detailing the pilot, its findings, and the newly branded model of integrated pediatric care.
 - **Care Coordination:** Support the implementation of individualized care coordination services at pediatricians’ offices to help families develop the knowledge and skills needed to navigate systems of care and manage recovery.
- **Phase II** of the project includes increasing the number of pediatric offices starting and sustaining care that effectively treats the behavioral health needs of children and youth in Palm Beach County and across the state.
 - **Participation:** Help determine the current level of motivation and integration in each office, as outlined by the SAMHSA-HRSA Center for Integrated Health Solutions. This will establish a baseline for the project.
 - **Learning Collaborative:** Convene a collaborative of local pediatricians with Dr. Fox-Levine and Dr. Schectman directing discussion and training.
 - Grow the learning collaborative into a network for individual and group consultation for pediatric offices building their internal practices and connect the network to statewide efforts.
 - Sustain the network of pediatricians, offering space for ongoing education, coaching, and exchange of updated information and ideas.
 - Work with local pediatricians to implement care coordination services.

- **Provider Partnerships:** Build capacity of community providers to strengthen the system of coordinated services locally.
- **University Partnerships:** Work with local colleges and universities to train medical students on the importance, benefits, and implementation of integrated pediatric care.
- **Communications:** Develop a platform for communicating the developing work and resources shared by the core partners.
- **Technology:** Investigate potential technology opportunities to aid a more efficient delivery system and transfer of care between providers.

Project Deliverables and Timeline

Timeline	Key Activities	Deliverables (This list in progress)
Phase I: January 2022-June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy • Learning and Evaluation • Standard of Care Documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of current policies influencing pediatric Integrated Care • Research regarding existing models and responses to key element questions • Bill submitted for 2023 legislative agenda • PBC Pediatric Integrated Care Report and Standard of Care Guide
Phase 2: July 2023 - June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community of Practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuum of care and motivation survey for PBC physicians/pediatricians • Physician learning collaborative • Platform for communicating pediatric integrated care efforts • Training for future pediatricians in providing integrated care