

Tracking a new system of mental health care for children

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One year after Louisiana changed the way it supports children with mental health issues, a statewide advocacy group is collecting information to monitor the system with the help of Sally Drape, a public health graduate student at Tulane University.



Public health graduate student Sally Drape stands outside The Advocacy Center's offices in New Orleans, where she is working as an intern. (Photo by Naomi King Englar)

Known as the Coordinated System of Care, this new system provides team-based support and gives five specific services to families, such as parent training and support, crisis management and peer-to-peer mentoring, in an effort to avoid institutionalization of children.

Sally Drape, a second-year graduate student at the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, is helping monitor the new system through an internship with the Advocacy Center. The Advocacy Center is a nonprofit that protects, empowers and advocates for the rights of people with disabilities and seniors living in

Louisiana.

The center hired Drape for the internship through the practicum program at the Tulane [Prevention Research Center](#), which matches graduate student interns and local host organizations for 300-hour practicum experiences.

“The Advocacy Center's staff is very limited, and we don't have the resources to devote to such extensive analysis of this system,” says Stephanie Patrick, director of policy and planning at the center.

Drape has conducted extensive research on best practices in other states. She's gathering information from agencies involved in the system transition to track how services are being provided. She's also meeting with families to get their perspectives and determine if there are areas for improvement.

To track the feedback, Drape created a survey tool to record information when she interviews families and has connected with several sets of parents. She hopes to interview more parents this spring, and has been attending public meetings related to youth and mental health to find those families.

“We're advocates for people and we need someone to go find these people and establish relationships,” Drape says.

Naomi King Englar is communications and training coordinator at the Tulane Prevention Research Center in the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.