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RURAL COUNTY STRENGTHENS ITS HEALTH SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

September 29, 2009 by JoLynne Lyon

People in rural areas face unique challenges when seeking mental health services. They often must drive long distances to see a professional. Sometimes, even if local professionals are available, they are not on insurance companies' lists of preferred providers.

Major County, Oklahoma has taken a smart and successful approach to these challenges, not only in the area of mental health services but across the spectrum of special health care needs for children.

Five years ago, results from a needs assessment survey showed that families in Oklahoma had an overwhelming need for mental health services for their children. Today, those services are easy to find and accessible throughout the community. Denice Haworth, County Coordinator for the statewide Sooner SUCCESS program, also ensures that any family with any need is served, even if they don't necessarily have a confirmed diagnosis. This includes families and children of any culture, socioeconomic status, or age.

To find out more, read Major County's story on the Champions for Inclusive Communities website. The county is one of several Star Communities recognized for providing coordinated, family-friendly services, emphasizing early screening, ensuring that families have the funding and insurance they need, and finding ways to transition children with disabilities into the adult world.

Champions InC is a national center funded by the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau. It is housed in the CPD's Early Intervention Research Institute at Utah State University.