For Immediate Release
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11- COUNTY STUDY REVEALS THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA’S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Profiles available for Alameda, Butte, Humboldt, Imperial, Los Angeles, Placer, San Diego, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz

New York City – The mental health needs of many of California’s children and families go unmet due to a number of factors that, simply put, could be better accommodated, say researchers at the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP). NCCP examined 11 of California’s counties to gauge how well the state supports and the counties provide mental health services for children and families.

NCCP is part of Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health. NCCP’s Unclaimed Children Revisited is a national survey of state-level children’s mental health directors and advocates that identified policies that support research-informed, culturally competent and developmentally appropriate services. The California Case Study looked at race, ethnicity, language barriers, geography, and economic status, among other factors. Broadly, each of the factors contributed to the problem of unmet needs.

While approximately six percent of California’s school-age children have mental health problems, fewer than two percent are using county mental health services, according to the NCCP report. In the county studies the proportion of the child and youth population that were service users varied from four percent in San Francisco to one percent in Placer and Santa Clara counties respectively.

“Although counties have experienced some success reaching this group, too many of California’s children have needs that remain unmet,” says Janice L. Cooper, PhD, interim director of NCCP, and leader of the Unclaimed Children Revisited project. “Unfortunately, young children and transition-age youth are even more vulnerable, as providers and county system leaders struggle to serve them.” Across counties public mental health services users who were children and youth differed by race/ethnicity and primary language spoken, Cooper reports.

Among key informants there was consensus about areas in children’s mental health that need reform says Cooper. “Major changes are needed in how services are delivered and funded in California. Suggested reforms ranged from broad changes beyond the field, such as broad-based health care coverage, to targeted initiatives such as facilitating integration and funding flexibility. In particular, system leaders and providers would like to see federal-level funding reform, the report concludes.

Unclaimed Children Revisited, The California Case Study was funded by the California Endowment Foundation and the Zellerbach Family Foundation. The full report, including a profile of each of the 11 counties studied, can be found online at: http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_934.html

The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) is the nation’s leading public policy center dedicated to promoting the economic security, health and well-being of America’s low-income families and children. Part of Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health, NCCP uses research to inform policy and practice with the goal of ensuring positive outcomes for the next generation.