

## Continuity of Care: Definitions

### Definition of Terms

**Community** - refers to a geographic area in which children and families are cared for. If a child received care in a tertiary hospital far from his/her home and then returns home for care, he/she is cared for in two communities.

**Networks/coalitions** - are groups of individuals and/or organizations working together (usually within one geographic community) to care for children and families.

**Systems or Care Systems** - include the people and organizations providing care, the people receiving care and all the processes involved in care delivery.

**Continuity of care** - the experience of both recipients and providers that everyone involved in the care process is working together across settings and throughout the course of illness, to address the unique needs and preferences of an individual patient and family.

### Elements of Continuity

Continuity of care is the central goal for Gems of Care. Based on a systematic review of the literature, Reid, Haggerty and colleagues\* defined three elements of continuity applicable in multiple specialties and care settings:

*Informational continuity*—The use of information about the patient’s medical condition, past treatment, and personal circumstances (including care preferences) to deliver the most appropriate care for each individual/family.

*Management continuity*—A coherent approach to the management of a health condition achieved via a consistent and flexible management plan that is accepted by all providers and the individual/family.

*Relational continuity*—A consistent therapeutic relationship between the individual/family and one or more providers; access at all times to a provider who “knows” the patient/family.

Element of Continuity	Components of coordinated care
Informational	<p><b>Families:</b> Having information and assistance to access services as needed</p> <p><b>Providers:</b> Having adequate information about the medical condition and the family, and adequate communication about all care being provided so they can deliver the right care at the right time</p>
Management	<p><b>Families:</b> Participating with providers in developing a shared care plan</p> <p><b>Providers:</b> Collaborating in care planning and delivery on a regular basis with family, clinicians and other providers within and outside their own institutions; delivering care based on a shared care plan</p>
Relational	<p><b>Families:</b> Able to identify the person or entity “in charge” of care and know how to contact that person or entity 24/7; having a consistent and reliable relationship with one or more providers</p> <p><b>Providers:</b> Acknowledging the role of the entity “in charge” of coordinating care; having consistent, reliable working relationships with other providers/entities serving the child and family</p>

\*Reid R, Haggerty J, McKendry R. (Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, Canadian Institute for Health Information Advisory Committee on Health Services of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers of Health). Defusing the confusion: Concepts and measures of continuity of healthcare. 2002.

\*Haggerty J, Reid R, Freeman G, Starfield B, Adair C, McKendry R. Continuity of Care: A Multidisciplinary Review. *British Medical Journal*. 2003;327(7425):1219-1221.