Talking Points

Child Mental Health

Lead with *Civic Responsibility* to establish why child mental health matters.

"In Jacksonville, we have a *shared responsibility* to live up to our obligations to our children. One way our city can make good on this collective commitment is to make sure that we pay attention to children's mental health needs."

Use *Levelness* to introduce the idea of mental health as part of child development.

"All children have mental health, and all children have mental health needs. Mental health is a part of all of us, a characteristic that defines us. Children's mental health supports all the aspects of their learning, growth, and development. Mental health is kind of like a table. If kids' mental health is sturdy, they are able to learn and grow. If it is wobbly, then they may fall behind."

Extend *Levelness* to position mental health issues as problems that can be addressed with well-matched interventions.

"We need to pay attention to children's mental health. As with a table, if we spot little wobbles early on, we can easily even things out. If the child's environment isn't stable, if he or she is faced with community violence, neglect, or chronic stress, then his or her mental health might waver. And like a table on an uneven floor, if there is a problem, children can't right themselves. These kids need outside help. We need to stabilize their foundation by adding supports that ensure that they stay level."

Use the *Cost and Coordination* explanatory chain to explain the challenges that Jacksonville faces when it comes to building a system to support child mental health.

"We know a lot about what it takes to foster positive mental health for kids. Yet Jacksonville's children currently have the worst mental health outcomes of any large city in Florida. Mental health services are expensive, and many families can't afford them. And, because Jacksonville is so spread out, people

often have a hard time simply accessing care. Moreover, the people who might notice a child's mental health problem—his or her pediatricians, teachers, school counselors, or parents—might not have good ways to share information. These challenges mean that many of our city's children don't get the mental health care they need. As a result, little wobbles that could have been prevented turn into bigger problems that are harder to solve."

Close with solutions; describe a promising or proven approach.

"We have a responsibility to meet the needs of our city's children, and we are doing so. Our System of Care *Initiative* coordinates the services that children need. In this initiative, case managers make sure that medical providers, counselors, school administrators, and families can communicate with each other to get children the right care at the right time. This initiative also helps parents and caregivers manage challenges related to transportation and cost. By building a system that is *accessible* and *coordinated*, we are improving outcomes for Jacksonville's children."