

3. Most Intensive/Restrictive Treatment

What if my child's school feels his/her emotional or behavioral needs cannot be met in their current educational program?

Partial Hospitalization Programs can be day treatment or evening programs where a psychiatrist and a treatment team work with your child to meet treatment goals. Although many children with behavioral or emotional problems do succeed in regular or special education programs, there may be a need for more intensive mental health treatment. Schools are to first consider changes in your child's educational instruction before suggesting an evaluation for this mental health placement. These programs need to be prescribed by a psychiatrist. An evening partial hospitalization program may provide more intensive treatment without disruption of your child's education.

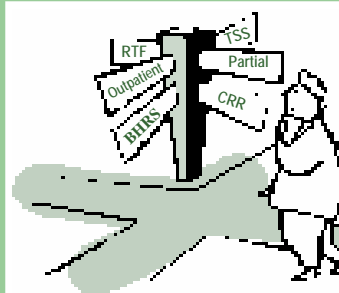
What if I can't handle my child's emotional or behavioral needs in my home?

If your child continues to need more services in order to be stabilized or to reach behavioral or emotional goals, then out of the home services may be considered. These services usually happen when other services have failed. However, you as the parent or your child (age 14 and older) need to agree to this level of care and it needs to be prescribed by a psychiatrist. Services should always be tried in the least invasive way before removing the child from his/her home. Please note that you do not have to give up custody of your child for a mental health treatment placement.

Community Residential Rehabilitation Individual Host or Group Home, also known as Therapeutic Foster Care or CRR Group Home, can be "specially trained foster parents" in a foster care setting or "24 hour round the clock care" in a group home setting to provide the necessary treatment to stabilize and return your child to his/her home and community. When in residential placement, your child's education can be provided in the public school setting or in a partial hospitalization program.

Residential Treatment Facility, also known as RTF, placements are out of the home where your child receives mental health treatment in an institutional or group home like setting addressing his/her mental health needs over a longer duration. Outside of a psychiatric hospitalization, a RTF placement is the most restrictive levels of care. Usually your child is placed for 10 to 12 months with on-going review and reauthorization every 4 months by the treating psychiatrist. Since all treatment facilities are different, you need to think carefully about selecting a RTF to meet your child's mental health needs. More information about RTFs is available by contacting The Advocacy Alliance.

Psychiatric Hospitalization, is a short-term stay in a psychiatric unit for stabilization due to immediate safety concerns. Admission requires your child to be considered a risk for self-harm or has the potential to harm others. The stays are limited in duration and your child may return to home or placement with the same or more restrictive service recommendations.



HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD IN THE MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM

The Children's Mental Health System in Pennsylvania is guided by CASSP (Child and Adolescent Service System Program) Principles. Each community is expected to develop programs and services based upon the CASSP Principles, which are:

**Client-Centered ~ Family-Focused ~ Community-Based
Multi-System ~ Culturally Competent
Least Restrictive/Least Intrusive**

As a family member or guardian, you need to be involved. You are an important part in planning the treatment your child will receive in the children's mental health system and you have the responsibility to educate yourself so that you can be an effective advocate for your child. This brochure was created to help you educate yourself and provide you with the information needed to understand the children's mental health system, your rights and your child's rights. Remember, the more you know about the options available to you and the way services are to be delivered, the more effectively you can advocate on behalf of your child.



The Advocacy Alliance's Children's Mental Health Advocate works on behalf of children and adolescents with emotional/behavioral disturbances and their families in asserting and protecting their rights in the mental health and various other child-serving systems of care.

Visit our website at www.theadvocacyalliance.org
or call us toll free: 1-877-315-6855.

Navigating the Children's Mental Health System

Understanding the *who, what, where, when* and *how* of accessing treatment for your child's emotional or mental health needs can be overwhelming. You probably wish there was a dictionary of acronyms, abbreviations and terms used in the "professional" world. The information provided will help you navigate the children's mental health system.

Four basic rules to being an effective advocate for your child.

Rule 1: Don't be afraid to ask questions.

Rule 2: Don't assume that the treating "professional" knows everything, including understanding service options.

Rule 3: Don't commit to anything if you are unsure. It's OK to take time when considering the treatment options.

Rule 4: You are the real expert when it comes to knowing your child.

How do I plan to communicate my child's needs?

- Remember you are part of the team treating your child.
- Preparation for meetings is expected of all participants involved in the treatment planning. This includes you, so ask yourself:
 - What do I want from my child's treatment?
 - What has or has not been successful in the past?

What is expected at a treatment team meeting?

- Identification of the child and family strengths.
- Identification of the problems, as the child and family sees them.
- Identification of the need areas for the child and family.
- Identification of what services might be available to meet your child's needs.
- Development of a plan of action identifying who is responsible for carrying out the plan from service initiation to delivery and monitoring.

Will the treatment team identify community or family resources?

- Some of your child's needs may be better met by natural supports.
- Ask yourself what family or community supports might help or have helped with your child's emotional or behavioral needs.
- Relatives who spend time with my child.
- Other child-serving organizations which can support my child (e.g., Boy's and Girl's Club, Little League, and YMCA)

What are my child's and family's mental health treatment rights?

- You and your child (age 14 or older) have the right to request treatment.
- You and your child have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- You and your child (age 14 and older) will need to give consent for treatment and the releasing of any of your mental health information. A child 14 or older can request outpatient mental health treatment without parental consent but does not have the right to refuse outpatient treatment.

Levels of Treatment

1. Outpatient Treatment

How do I choose a therapist, psychologist or psychiatrist?

- Ask other parents about their experiences.
- Ask the treating professional you are considering about his/her treatment approach and/or qualifications.
- Ask your child what they think about the treating professional.
- Ask how frequently he/she will meet with you. Some therapists can see you weekly, while most psychiatrists see you once a month.
- Ask about their emergency coverage plan. Is someone available to assist you in a crisis situation?

Do I use a public or a private mental health provider?

- Medical Insurance can dictate who you will be treated by, however usually you are provided with several approved provider names from which you can choose.
- In most cases community mental health centers can provide more extensive coverage and services than private providers.
- A child with a mental health disability may be eligible for medical assistance (MA) card to qualify for more intensive services.

2. More Intensive Treatment

Can the following services be delivered in my home, in my child's school or in the community?

If your child's mental health needs require more intensive services, your child may be eligible to receive services in-home, in school, or in the community. With the exception of case management, these types of services must be prescribed by a psychiatrist or a psychologist. The child may need a MA Card to receive services.

Case Management Services are provided to children who are in need of assistance in accessing, coordinating and monitoring resources and services in the community.

Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services (BHRS) are provided in your child's environment and are therapeutic with behavioral goals established. A psychiatrist or psychologist prescribes the number of hours for the treatment team to "treat" your child. These services include one or more professionals (i.e., Behavior Specialist, Mobile Therapist or Therapeutic Staff Support) to provide treatment.

Family Home Base Services are prescribed by a psychiatrist and can be flexible to the needs of your family. This program provides both therapy and case management services to avoid an out of home placement. Usually this is two professionals who work as a team.