

Taking Charge of Your Child's Mental Health

A Parent's Guide



Allegheny County Department of Human Services
Office of Behavioral Health
Bureau of Child and Adolescent Services
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The Allegheny County Department of Human Services seeks to create an accessible, culturally competent, integrated and comprehensive human services system that ensures individually tailored, seamless, and holistic services to Allegheny County residents, in particular, the County's vulnerable populations.

Introduction

If you are reading these words, you are probably a parent who cares deeply about the life and well being of your child. And, if you know or suspect that your child is experiencing emotional or behavioral difficulties, confusion has been an ongoing part of your daily life, possibly for some time now. You may have noticed behaviors that puzzle, annoy or even frighten you. You have decided to take action, but you don't know where to start. Sometimes it is difficult to know the best way to love and guide your child.

The Allegheny County Bureau of Child and Adolescent Services has prepared this **Parent Guide** to help you make informed decisions about your child's mental health. To relieve some of the confusion, you will learn about the voluntary treatment and support services that are available to you. You will discover that there are many outstanding agencies in Allegheny County that are continually working to provide an accessible, culturally competent, integrated and comprehensive human services system to help you in meeting the mental health needs of your child.

As a parent, your expertise is valued and respected. You know your child best. All mental health services are designed to build on the strengths and needs of your unique child and family. These strengths will be continually assessed, appreciated, utilized and celebrated.

If you want to learn more about your child's mental health and the resources that are available, keep reading.

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Child and Adolescent Services System Program (CASSP Principles)

The following principles are at the heart of all programs and services offered by the Allegheny County Department of Human Services to a child or adolescent with mental health problems:

- **Child Centered** - ensuring that services meet the unique needs of each individual child
- **Family Focused** - focusing on the strengths and capabilities of each individual family
- **Community Based** - recognizing the importance of both formal and informal community resources in the delivery of services
- **Multi - System Involvement** - understanding that a child/family may be dealing with multiple organizations or institutions and that it is the responsibility of these systems to coordinate their services
- **Culturally Competent** - demonstrating respect for individuals, their preferences, attitudes, values, beliefs, and traditions
- **Least Restrictive** - providing high quality treatment and support service in the most natural environment that is available and appropriate

What is Mental Health?

What is mental health?

In order to understand mental health problems, it is important, first, to understand mental health. Mental health is how we think, feel and act in order to face life's situations. It is how we look at ourselves, our lives, and the people we care about and know. It also helps to determine how we handle stress, relate to others, evaluate our options and make choices.

How can I tell if my child has a mental health problem?

It is easy for a parent to recognize when a child has a fever. A fever is a symptom that something is physically wrong. There are also symptoms that could indicate that your child has a mental health problem. As a parent, you know your child best. Ask yourself the following questions or look for these symptoms:

1. What is your child saying to you and to others? Is he or she troubled by feeling:
 - Really sad, irritable, or "down?"
 - Very angry most of the time?
 - Worthless?
 - Anxious, worried, or fearful a lot more than others his or her age?
 - Constantly concerned about physical problems or physical appearance?
 - Frightened that his or her mind is controlled or out of control?
 - That life is too hard to handle or that life seems hopeless?

2. Have you noticed a "big change" in your child? For example, is he or she:
 - Doing much worse in school?

- Losing interest in things that he or she used to enjoy?
 - Sleeping or eating much more or less than usual?
 - Avoiding friends or family and wanting to be alone all of the time?
 - Daydreaming too much, and can't get things done?
 - Hearing voices that cannot be explained?
 - Unable to get over a loss or death of someone important?
3. Is your child limited at home, in school or in social situations by:
- Poor concentration; can't seem to think straight or to make up his or her mind?
 - The inability to sit still?
 - Thoughts that race almost too fast to follow?
 - Worries about being harmed, hurting others, or about doing something "bad?"
 - The need to wash, clean, or perform certain routines many times a day?
 - Persistent nightmares?
4. Does your child behave in ways that cause problems? For example, does he or she:
- Use alcohol or other drugs?
 - Eat large amounts of food, then vomit; abuse laxatives?
 - Continue to diet and to lose weight even though very thin?
 - Do things that can be life threatening?

Here are some other things to consider:

1. Does anyone in your child's family have a history of mental health problems? This would include parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters and extended family.

2. Is your child a girl or a boy? Be sure to consider possible symptoms in relation to your child's gender. Symptoms are occasionally overlooked because it is socially acceptable for boys or girls to act in a certain way.
3. What is your child's age? Behavior that is alarming at one age may be perfectly normal at another age.
4. Has your child been physically ill or in an accident? Physical problems can sometimes lead to mental health problems.
5. Have your child's symptoms lasted for a period of time? Some symptoms may appear and then disappear quickly.

Your observations are important. If you are concerned by your answers to the above questions, it may be important to have your child evaluated. Mental health problems can be recognized and treated before your child is in a crisis situation. Caring parents and professionals working together can make the difference.

What causes mental health problems? Am I to blame?

It is natural for both the parent and the child to want to find a reason for mental health problems. As a parent, you may blame yourself for your lack of parenting skills, your job, your style of discipline or even your lack of consistency. You may wonder, "If only I had done this or that differently, would my son/daughter be fine?" On the other hand, children want to know why they do the things that they do, or feel the way that they feel. If no answers are available, your child may start believing that the situation is hopeless.

It is important to realize that blaming yourself, or your child, is not the answer. All of the causes of mental health problems are not yet known, however, great strides in understanding mental health problems have been made in the past ten years, and a great deal more is being learned every day. It is known that both **biology** and **environment** play a part.

Biological causes include genetics, chemical imbalances, and damage to the central nervous system. The medical profession refers to these as "neurobiological brain disorders." Researchers continue to advance in understanding the biological links to mental health problems, and treatment today is much more effective than it was in the recent past.

Environmental factors can put children at risk or make existing biological factors even worse. Children exposed to violence, abuse, neglect, loss of a loved one, or to substances such as lead, are more at risk of developing mental health problems. Other risk factors include rejection due to race, religion, sexual orientation or poverty. Fortunately, treatment options for children experiencing unfavorable environmental factors have also improved. Therapy and a wide range of community based services are available to help children and their families deal with mental health problems and issues.

If you suspect that your child has a mental health problem, your willingness to seek help for your child in working through his or her problems is a major part of the solution.

How do I find out if my child has a mental health problem?

Where Do I Start?

In Allegheny County, there are many "starting points" that you can choose in order to have your child's symptoms evaluated. Where you start is often a matter of personal preference, insurance coverage, existing relationships you may have with a family doctor or other professionals, or the severity of your child's symptoms. Occasionally, someone else (such as the school, police, or your family doctor) may recommend that you have your child evaluated, and may provide you with a referral.

Here are some suggested starting points:

1. Your Family Doctor or Pediatrician. You may be surprised to know that there are a number of physical conditions that can mimic or lead to mental health problems. If your child has a family doctor or pediatrician, this is a good place to start. Schedule an appointment with your doctor and be prepared to talk openly and honestly about your child's symptoms. Your doctor will examine your child and may order some tests. This doctor is making sure that there aren't any known physical reasons why your child is experiencing mental health symptoms.
2. Neurologist. If no apparent physical causes are found by your family doctor, your child may be referred to a neurologist. A neurologist is a specialist who can check brain structure or brain functioning by using a variety of tests.
3. Psychiatrist. You may be referred to a psychiatrist, or you may choose to select a psychiatrist without a referral. A psychiatrist is a medical doctor who will use a variety of psychological tests and techniques in order to evaluate your

child's mental health symptoms. A psychiatrist can prescribe medicine, if necessary.

4. Psychologist. You may be referred to a psychologist, or you may choose to select a psychologist without a referral. A clinical psychologist is licensed to diagnose and treat mental health problems. He/she may use a variety of psychological tests and techniques to evaluate your child, much like a psychiatrist. However, a psychologist cannot prescribe medication.

Note: If you don't have a family doctor or don't know how to select a psychiatrist or psychologist, there are a number of resources that can help you. They are:

- Ask your health insurance provider to furnish you with a list of physician names, specialties and office locations.
 - Call Community Care Behavioral Health Organization at 1-800-553-7499 if your child currently receives medical assistance through the Department of Public Welfare and currently lives in Allegheny County.
 - Call the Physician Referral Service at your local hospital.
 - Call the Allegheny County Medical Society for a list of physician choices. Their phone number is 412-321-5030.
5. School Guidance Counselor. Your child's guidance counselor can be very helpful in referring you to local resources and professionals, especially if your child's symptoms have caused your child to have problems at school. You can talk to the guidance counselor by phone or in person. Call your child's

school district, and they will help you contact the appropriate guidance counselor.

6. Clergy. The clergy, or religious leaders, at your church or synagogue can provide a wealth of information about services that are available to you and your child. Some families are more comfortable in dealing with someone they know.
7. Service Coordination Units. You may choose to go to a Service Coordination Unit, which generally is a part of a community mental health center. There are a number of public and private mental health centers in Allegheny County. Each one operates a little differently, but, in general, these centers are full-service mental health programs. Psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and many other professionals staff these facilities. They evaluate needs, plan a comprehensive treatment program with you and your child, and make the necessary services available on a continuing basis. They are also responsible for making sure that your child gets the services he or she may need and for coordinating the services that are being provided.

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services contracts with a number of Service Coordination Units (community mental health centers). These are located throughout Allegheny County, and you have the choice of where you go to have your child evaluated. These Service Coordination Units and their phone numbers are listed on page 18.

A listing of providers that contract with the Allegheny County Department of Human Services and serve the needs of children and adolescents with mental health issues can be found in a separate publication called Where to Call Directory 2003. You

can get a copy of this publication by calling Information, Referral and Emergency Services at 412-350-4456.

In addition, the names and phone numbers of many private mental health centers can be found in the Yellow Pages of your phone book under the heading of "Mental Health." You can also find a number of listings in the Blue Pages of your regular phone book in the "Guide to Human Services" under "Mental Health Programs."

List of Allegheny County Service Coordination Units

Allegheny East MH/MR Center, Inc.
712 South Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15221
412-731-9707

Mon Yough Community Services
355 Shaw Avenue
McKeesport, PA 15132
412-675-8300

Chartiers MH/MR Center, Inc.
437 Railroad Street
Bridgeville, PA 15017
412-221-3302

Staunton Clinic
Sewickley Valley Hospital
720 Blackburn Road
Sewickley, PA 15143
412-749-7330

Family Services of Western Pennsylvania
3230 William Pitt Way
Pittsburgh, PA 15238
1-888-222-4200

Turtle Creek Valley MH/MR
723 Braddock Avenue
Braddock, PA 15104
412-351-0222

Mercy Behavioral Health
1200 Reedsdale Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15233
412-323-4500

**UPMC/Western Psychiatric
Institute and Clinic**
3811 O'Hara Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
412-624-1000

***MH/MR** = Mental Health/Mental Retardation

8. Crisis Services. If your child's symptoms are severe, and you feel that your child may be a threat to him or herself or to others, you may not have time to schedule an appointment with one of the professionals listed above. If this is the case, call:

- Allegheny Crisis Emergency Services (ACES)
1-888-424-2287

This service operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and provides mental health crisis intervention services for all residents of Allegheny County. This program is staffed by trained clinicians able to handle crisis telephone calls and requests for services. They will also respond onsite to crisis situations, if needed.

- Information, Referral and Emergency Services (IRES)
1-412-350-4457 (emergency number)
1-412-350-4456 (non-emergency number)

This service operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and puts you in touch with Allegheny County staff that can provide information, find someone to provide ongoing help, or help you arrange involuntary examination and treatment when needed.

Preparing for your first visit to a mental health professional

Unfortunately, some families hesitate to seek help for their child. They may be afraid about what will happen at the first visit to a professional, or about what the professional might say is wrong with their child. They may be afraid about what others may think or say. But, if you are reading this information, you have already taken the first step in realizing that your child might need help (and in preparing to get that help).

Between 80 - 90% of all children with mental health problems will respond very well to treatment.

At your first visit, you will be asked questions about your child and your family history. You will also be asked about your child's mental health symptoms. This information is **confidential**, meaning that it will not be shared with anyone else unless you give written permission for it to be shared. You will have an opportunity to ask questions, and will want to be prepared to do so.

Some therapists treat the child individually, while others involve the parents and other family members in the process. You need to be comfortable with the level of family involvement. If you aren't, talk to the therapist about this. If you are not comfortable with the therapist after a reasonable amount of time, get a second opinion. Remember that you are an advocate for your child, and you should be comfortable with the professionals who are providing services.

Some information that you will want to have available for the first visit includes:

- Your child's birth certificate (a copy is fine)
- Your child's Social Security Number
- Your child's health insurance information
- Knowledge of your child's medical history (any illness or injuries)
- Knowledge of your child's developmental milestones (when your child walked, talked, etc.)
- Knowledge of your child's mental health symptoms
- Knowledge of your child's strengths, skills, and talents

At the end of your first visit, you should be glad that you went. You have taken the first step! Your doctor or therapist will present you with treatment options for your child. You will be able to make choices about the services that you and your child may receive. Mental health services are voluntary. Ideally, you will work in partnership with your child's doctor or therapist in restoring your child to good health.

How To Advocate for Your Child

To initiate mental health services and find the resources your child needs, you must be able to adequately represent your child. This requires that you act as an **advocate** for your child, making sure that your child's needs are met and his or her rights are protected. To become an effective advocate, you can:

- Identify the needs of your child and note the areas in which he or she might need help.
- Gather information on available resources.
- Start keeping your own records including notes on your observations.
- Prepare in advance for meetings or telephone calls with agencies or therapists. Know which questions you want to ask and which concerns you want to discuss.
- Follow up to make sure that things occur when promised or services agreed to have actually been delivered.
- Monitor your child's progress and express yourself if you have concerns.
- Learn about and understand the rights of your child and family.

You know your child best. You will want to make sure that the needs of your child and your family are being met.

Ongoing Evaluation, Diagnosis and Treatment

Evaluation

It may take several visits and a number of tests for the doctor or therapist to decide on a "working diagnosis" for your child. An accurate diagnosis, in combination with other factors, is vital to your child's well being, because this will determine the best treatment options. However, diagnosing child mental health problems is sometimes difficult. There are no blood tests or X-rays that will pinpoint a diagnosis like there are with many physical conditions. **It may take time and patience before all symptoms and behaviors are evaluated and understood. Be aware that, as your child grows older and develops, his or her symptoms may change, causing the diagnosis to change.**

Diagnosis

Some of the more common child and adolescent mental health diagnoses that you may hear are:

1. Anorexia/Bulimia. These are eating disorders. In Anorexia Nervosa, the child believes that he or she is overweight despite evidence to the contrary. This results in continuous efforts to lose weight, even to the point of starvation in the most serious cases. Bulimia is when the child eats large quantities of food and deliberately vomits immediately after eating.
2. Anxiety Disorder. A disorder that causes the child to be so afraid, worried or uneasy that it becomes difficult for them to function.

3. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). This disorder is characterized by greater than normal periods of inattention, impulsivity and/or hyperactivity. These symptoms often cause significant problems in social situations, at home and at school (or work).
4. Autism. A disorder, usually appearing by age 3, characterized by a lack of communication, lack of social skills, withdrawal and development delays.
5. Bipolar Disorder. Also called manic-depression, bipolar disorder generally involves cycles of depression and elevated mood. Mood switches can occur rapidly or can be more gradual.
6. Conduct Disorder. Children with this disorder have serious delinquent and antisocial behaviors, including burglary, vandalism, intimidation of people, and using weapons with the intention of causing serious harm.
7. Depression. This disorder refers to a combination of emotional and physical symptoms that affect a child's ability to sleep, eat, concentrate and enjoy life.
8. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). A disorder where the child becomes trapped in a pattern of repetitive thoughts and/or behaviors. Obsessive thoughts may include thoughts, words or pictures that keep coming into his or her head, without the ability to get rid of them. Compulsive behaviors may include repeated hand washing, counting, or rearranging objects.

9. Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD). This disorder is defined as a recurring pattern of negative, disobedient and hostile behavior most often toward adults that persist for a long period of time.
10. Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD). A disorder characterized by extreme distortions or delays in the development of social behavior and communication skills.
11. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. This disorder can develop in children after they have personally experienced or witnessed a serious traumatic event.

Treatment

Treatment options for children with mental health problems may include a combination of:

- Therapy
- Medications
- Hospitalization (rare)

Only a doctor or psychologist can prescribe treatment for mental health problems. Remember that most children with mental health problems respond well to treatment. You and your doctor or therapist will work together to decide what type of treatment will work best for your child and your family.

Therapy

There are many different types of therapy. Part of your child's treatment plan may include:

1. Individual Therapy. This involves an ongoing discussion between your child and the therapist. As you might suspect, the older the child, the more beneficial this type of treatment may be, although some therapists specialize in providing therapy to very young children.

Generally speaking, the goals of therapy will be to improve self-esteem, social skills, and interpersonal relationships. Therapists also teach a variety of techniques such as anger management, relaxation, problem solving and self-control -- to help change problem behaviors.

2. Group Therapy. Occasionally, a child may be involved in group therapy. This involves one or more therapists and several children with similar mental health problems. This type of group can provide a safe environment for your child to develop, learn and practice new skills.
3. Family Therapy. Children with mental health problems impact everyone around them. Family members learn how to interact and deal more successfully with their child who is experiencing mental health problems.
4. Play Therapy. Play therapy is often an appropriate approach to counseling young children because most children under the age of ten have not yet developed the reasoning skills or verbal abilities to express their thoughts and feelings. A therapist will use toys and play to assist a child in expressing his/her feelings.

Medication

The medications used today for the treatment of mental health problems can dramatically improve the quality of a child's life. Just as a pair of glasses can help a person to see better, medication can help a child with mental health problems see the world more clearly. When medication is effective, the results can be significant.

However, medication is not the solution to all mental health problems, nor is it the answer for all children. It can be a difficult process to know exactly which medication (and dosage) will work best for any individual child. Often, trial-and-error is the rule, necessitating multiple medication trials until the right combination of drugs is found. This process can be frustrating, and may require time and patience on the part of you and your child.

For those that it does help, medication can make the mental health symptoms less severe, but it does not "cure" the problem. Medication should only be used under close medical supervision, and only as a part of a comprehensive treatment program that includes a careful diagnostic evaluation, education and therapy.

There are many types of medications used to treat mental health problems. There are too many to list them here. But, like any medication, for any condition, you will want to become very familiar with the benefits and side effects. Work with your doctor, and observe and monitor your child closely whenever a medication is started or stopped, or if the dosage is adjusted. Be sure that your child takes all medications correctly, the right dose at the right time.

To find out more about any medication that may be prescribed for your child, the following resources are available:

- Your pharmacist
- Your local library
- The following web sites on the Internet:
 - ◆ A guide to children's medications. American Academy of Pediatrics. <http://www.medem.com/> and type "Medications" in the "search" box.
 - ◆ Facts for Families, a series of informative fact sheets that include information on medications for children. Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.
<http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/index.htm>

Hospitalization

It is always best to treat a child's mental health problems in the "least restrictive" setting. This means that your child will most often receive treatment in the most natural environment available, such as in the office of a doctor, therapist, a Service Coordination Unit, or even at home. However, there are some situations when your child may need the most intensive treatment available. Generally speaking, a child would only be admitted to a psychiatric hospital or the psychiatric unit of a full service hospital if:

- They are a clear danger to themselves (threatening or trying to commit suicide).
- They are a danger to others (threatening or trying to hurt someone else).

If you observe the above behaviors, call your child's doctor or therapist immediately. If you don't have a doctor or therapist or if you can't reach them, take your child to the nearest emergency room, call an ambulance, or call Allegheny Crisis Emergency Services (ACES) at 1-888-424-2278.

Again, you know your child best. The decision to hospitalize a child should not be taken lightly, but it may be the best option at a given time in order to keep your child safe.

What other treatment and support services are available for my child?

Treatment and Support Services

After your child has been evaluated, diagnosed, and treatment has begun, your mental health professional will work with you and your child to help you decide which services you want and need, based on your family's strengths, culture and values. Your child's treatment may be as simple as receiving outpatient therapy once or twice a month. Or your child's treatment may be more complex if it is suggested that a variety of treatment and support services are needed to help your child succeed. Whatever course is recommended, remember that you are an advocate for your child. You will want to make sure that your child receives the best possible services available. You know:

- How your child responds to different situations
- What your child's strengths and needs are
- What your child likes and dislikes
- What has worked and what has not worked

Treatment

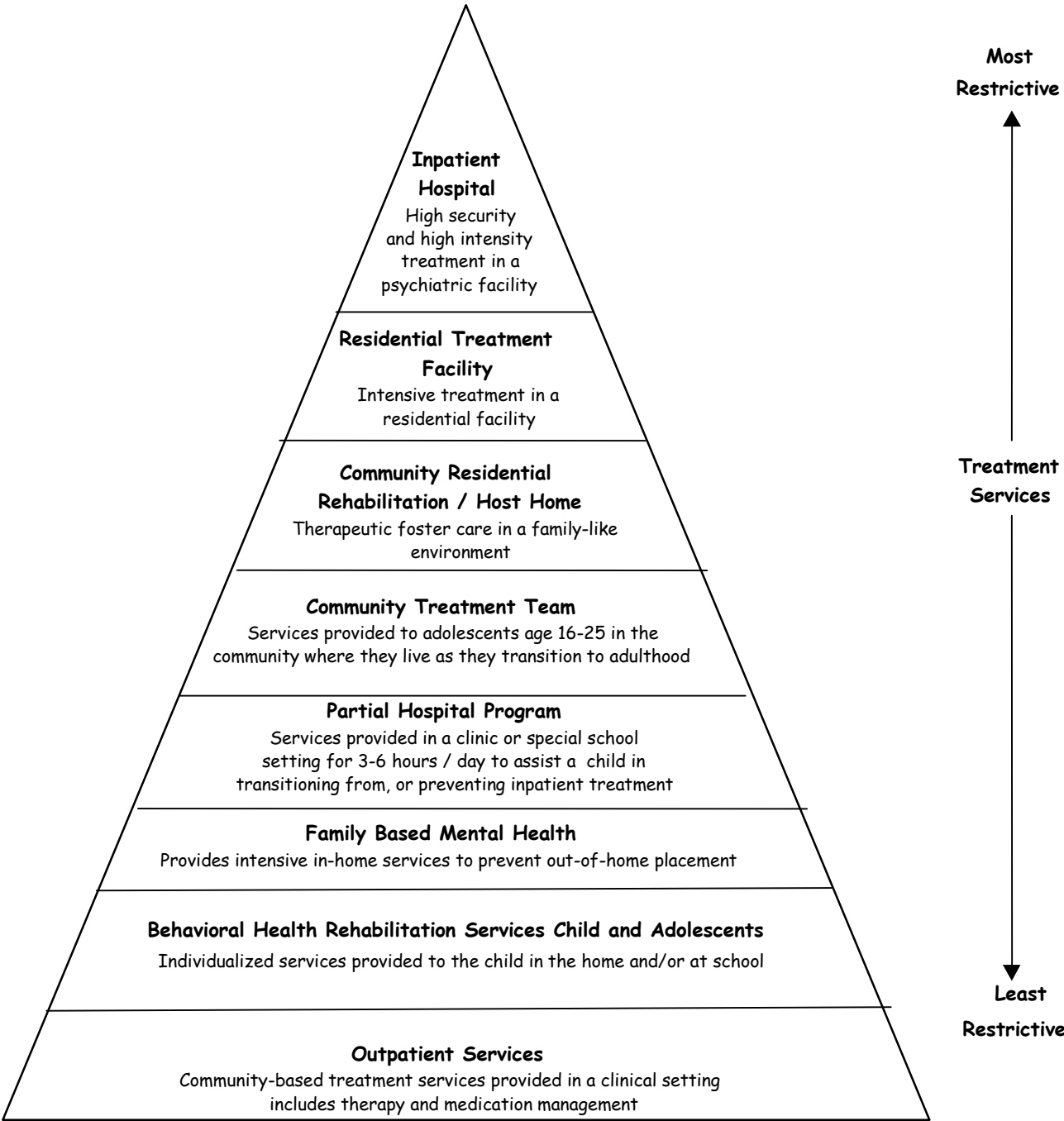
Continuum of Care - Overview

In Allegheny County, there is a wide range of treatment and support services available to you and your child. The following may be used to determine the level of treatment and support services that your child may need:

- Your child's diagnosis
- How he or she is responding to treatment
- How he or she is doing in school and in the community
- How he or she is interacting within your family.

The goal is always to provide services in the least restrictive setting, the safest and most natural environment that is available and appropriate in meeting the needs of your child. In rare situations, services may have to be provided in a more restrictive setting such as a hospital. While the duration of services provided in more restrictive environments varies, the goal is to return your child home to continue treatment. As your child's needs change, he or she may require services that are less restrictive in some cases or, in other cases, more restrictive. You should be involved in making sure that the level of care is right for you and your child. This range of treatment and support services is referred to as a **continuum of care**. It is designed to provide the right level of treatment service at the right time for your child.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Continuum of Care for Treatment Services - Chart



Continuum of Care Treatment Services - Description

The following treatment services are available to you and your child. All mental health services (with the exception of an involuntary commitment to a hospital) are voluntary, and you and your child are able to choose the best provider for you and your family. All treatment services must be prescribed by a doctor or psychologist.

1. Outpatient Services. We have already talked about how to access a mental health professional. (See pages 14 - 21). This is the least restrictive way to get help for your child. Many children with mental health problems will never need any additional treatment or support services. You will want to work closely with your doctor or psychologist in order to get your child the services he or she needs.
2. Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services - Children and Adolescents (BHRSCA). Also known as wraparound services, these in-home services provide focused therapeutic and behavioral support to your child, focusing on his or her strengths and needs. These services are designed to develop stability; improve functioning in the family, at school, and within the community; and help your child to receive services in the least restrictive setting possible. Services are generally provided by: a Behavioral Specialist Consultant (BSC) who writes the treatment plans and supervises the team; a Mobile Therapist (MT) who provides counseling services; and/or a Therapeutic Staff Support (TSS) who works directly with your child, providing support and redirection, as well as working with you and your child's caregivers.

3. Family Based Mental Health (FBMH). These comprehensive services are designed to assist families in caring for their child or adolescent at home. Services may include treatment for the child and other family members, case management and family support services. Services are available twenty four hours a day, seven days a week and are provided by a team of mental health professionals in the family's home.

4. Partial Hospital Program - A nonresidential form of intensive treatment provided in a freestanding or special school-based program for 3 - 6 hours per day. Structured treatment and support services include group and individual therapy, continuation of education, medication management, social interaction, pre-vocational instruction and crisis counseling. As their mental health improves, the goal is to return the child to his or her regular school and to more stable functioning within the family. This option is often recommended for a child who is transitioning from inpatient hospital treatment or as an alternative to hospitalization.

5. Community Treatment Team. Teams made up of a psychiatrist, nurse, therapist, case manager and vocational specialist provide comprehensive and intensive services to transition age adolescents (age 16 - 25) in the community where they live. This treatment approach is intended for individuals who require assistance in achieving and maintaining mental health stability in the community, and who would continue to experience hospitalizations, incarcerations, psychiatric emergencies or homelessness without these services.

6. Community Residential Rehabilitation/Host Home. Some children (approximately 1% of children with mental health problems) are not able to live at home. There are many reasons why this may happen, including:

- The child's mental health symptoms are severe.
- The family is not able to provide the appropriate level of care for the child.
- There is no family unit.

If a child cannot live at home, he or she may receive services in a Community Residential Rehabilitation/Host Home. This option provides a transitional residential program either in a foster family setting or a small group home. A host home provides therapeutic services 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

7. Residential Treatment Facility (RTF). This is another option for a child who cannot live at home. A Residential Treatment Facility provides intensive, structured treatment and support services for children who have severe mental health problems and require continuous treatment and supervision.

As with all mental health treatment, the goal for children in residential treatment is to enable the child to succeed in eventually returning home or to a less restrictive treatment setting.

8. Inpatient Hospital Services. We have already talked about inpatient hospital services on page 28. Children who are a danger to themselves or others may need to be hospitalized until their condition is stable. An inpatient hospital stay usually lasts from a few days to several weeks. As with all mental health treatment, the goal is to stabilize the child and

to continue treatment and support services in a less restrictive setting.

How to Choose a Provider of Treatment Services

In Allegheny County, there are many different providers of the treatment services listed above. If your child's doctor recommends that he or she may benefit from these services, you will be able to select the provider(s) who best meets your needs. The best way to find out who the providers are, and how to contact them, is to get a copy of the *Where to Call Directory (2003)* by calling Information, Referral and Emergency Services at 412-350-4456.

To select a provider, call and ask questions. Find out what services are offered and what will be expected of you and your child. Ask for written information. Talk to other parents who are involved with the agency. It is your right to get the finest treatment possible for your child. You will want to make an informed choice when selecting where your child receives treatment and who will provide the services.

Support Services

There are a number of mental health support services that are available, in addition to treatment services, to help you and your child.

1. Case Management Services

Some children with mental health problems will require a variety of treatment services. Coordination of these services can quickly

become complicated, confusing, and time consuming for the family. **Case managers** know the mental health system. They can ease the burden and help to coordinate services for you and your child. Children qualify for case management services based on their diagnosis and how well they are able to interact at home, in school, and in the community. Any child in Allegheny County with a diagnosed mental health problem is eligible for case management services, regardless of their family income or insurance coverage. In fact, many health insurance providers require case management. **You will have a choice of who will provide case management services.**

There are three levels of service. They are:

- Administrative Case Management. This is usually a starting point for most families. If your child receives treatment from any Service Coordination Unit in Allegheny County, an administrative case manager will help to assure that an assessment is done, a treatment and service plan is written, referrals are made, and that your child receives the treatment and support services that are needed.
- Resource Coordinators. If your child is experiencing more significant mental health problems and needs to receive treatment from two or more mental health providers or publicly funded systems (such as Education, Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice), a resource coordinator would assist you and your child in coordinating these services.
- Intensive Case Management. If your child is experiencing more severe mental health problems that interfere with his or her ability to function at home, at school, and in the community, an intensive case manager will assist you by

serving as a link between multiple systems and as an advocate for your child in getting the services that he or she needs.

2. **Enhanced Case Management Services.** There are also three separately funded, unique case management programs in Allegheny County. They are:

- **The Alliance for Infants and Toddlers.** This program coordinates services for children (age 0 - 3 years) who have a diagnosis or condition that has a high probability of leading to a developmental delay. "At risk" children include:
 - Children whose birth weight is less than 3 pounds, 5 ounces.
 - Children who were cared for in the hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.
 - Children born to chemically dependent mothers.
 - Children involved with Children, Youth, and Families (CYF).
 - Children with confirmed lead poisoning.

(Any child in Allegheny County who is under age three can have a developmental screening and evaluation, even if he or she doesn't fall into one of the above categories.)

Services may include developmental screening and assessment; coordination of specialized early intervention services; and parent education and support. All services are provided in the home or in a community setting. Services are voluntary and free of charge. For more information, call 412-885-6000.

- The Life Project. This program is for children between the ages of 2 and 21 who have serious emotional or behavioral problems and are considered to be at high risk for placement outside of the family home. The Life Project plans, implements and coordinates:
 - Enhanced case management with a focus on multiple system involvement
 - Intensive mental health treatment
 - Advocacy for the needs of the child and family
 - Linking families with community and other natural supports
 - Streamlined funding offering opportunities for unique and creative treatment and support services

All services are voluntary and free of charge. For more information, call 412-884-4500.

- Shuman Center Project. This program is for children/adolescents with mental health problems who are being detained at Shuman Detention Center. The Shuman Center Project provides:
 - A case manager who will coordinate mental health services to ensure that services will be in place for the child upon release from the detention center
 - Linkages to the probation officer
 - Advocacy for the child/adolescent

This service is voluntary and is provided free of charge. For more information, call 412-665-4144.

3. Mobile Crisis Services. The goal of this support service is to work with the child with mental health problems during a

crisis (in the home, at school, or in the community) in order to prevent injury or hospitalization. When called, a crisis intervention team will come to the child to assess, coordinate, treat and refer, if necessary. This service is voluntary and provided free of charge. Allegheny County residents should call Allegheny Crisis Emergency Services (ACES) at 1-888-424-2287 for more information.

4. Student Assistance Program (SAP). This is a prevention program provided in every middle and senior high school in Allegheny County. Through this program, school personnel are trained to identify potential emotional or behavioral issues that may be causing a child to experience barriers to learning. In collaboration with the family and school personnel, a Student Assistance Program Liaison will provide treatment suggestions and offer assistance in obtaining mental health services, if needed. The goal of the program is to improve the child's success at school. If you want more information, contact your child's school or the Allegheny County Student Assistance Program Coordinator who can be reached at 412-350-3353.

5. Liaison Services. There are a number of professionals in Allegheny County who are specifically trained to recognize that mental health problems can impact a child in a variety of settings and situations. The following professional liaisons help to identify "at risk" children and work in partnership with the family and outside agencies to link the child to mental health services he or she may need. To contact any one of the following liaisons, call 412-350-5746 or 412-350-4978.

- Education Liaison. This professional helps families and schools resolve educational concerns. This professional also serves as an advocate for families by providing information to assure that appropriate educational plans are developed to meet your child's needs. This service is free of charge. Additional information about educational issues and services can be found on pages 58 - 59.
 - Children, Youth and Families (CYF)/Interagency Liaison. This professional works with CYF to identify children who may be "at risk" for mental health problems, and acts as a link between the two systems. This professional also attends and follows up on Allegheny County Interagency Reviews. (See pages 59-60 for more information.)
 - Allegheny Intermediate Unit Liaison. This professional works with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit to identify children who may have mental health problems. This liaison acts as a link between the mental health and mental retardation systems.
 - Homeless Shelter Liaison. This professional works with children who are living in homeless shelters and serves as a link to mental health services, when needed.
6. Family Support Programs in Allegheny County. Family Support Programs are based on the philosophy that the most effective way to ensure the healthy development and growth of small children (ages 0 - 5) is by supporting families in the community where they live. These programs are designed to:
- Increase the strengths and stability of families.

- Increase parents' confidence and competence in their parenting abilities.
- Afford children a stable and supportive family environment.
- Chart the progress of the child and family.

Services offered by the Family Support Programs include:

- Child Development
- Parenting Education
- Infant & Toddler Groups
- Parent Support Groups
- Case Management
- Resource Center
- Parent Leadership and Advocacy

There are currently 31 Family Support Centers located in communities throughout Allegheny County. A listing of these centers can be found in Appendix II on pages 68 - 69.

7. System of Care. Over the past decade, there has been a national effort to help states and counties build **systems of care** for children and adolescents with serious emotional disorders and their families. A system of care is a comprehensive range of mental health and other necessary services and supports which are organized into a coordinated network to meet the multiple and changing needs of children and their families.

The core values of the system of care philosophy specify that services should be community-based, child centered, family focused, and culturally competent.

The guiding principles specify that services and supports should be:

- Comprehensive
- Individualized and strengths based
- Provided in the least restrictive and most appropriate setting
- Coordinated at both the service delivery and system levels and built on multiagency collaboration
- Involve families and youth as full partners
- Emphasize early identification and intervention

In 1998, the Allegheny County Department of Human Services was awarded a grant to develop and implement a system of care called **Community Connections for Families** in five partner communities for children ages 6 - 14. These communities are:

- East End
- Hill District
- McKeesport
- Sto-Rox
- Wilkinsburg

At the heart of Community Connections for Families is a strong family and community partnership that strives to bring families the services and supports that they need and want, not simply what is dictated by traditional services, contracts, funding, and institutional structures.

Community Connections for Families' goal is to improve the coordination and service integration that impacts children with serious emotional disorders as well as their families. Their service coordinators work with all of the child-serving systems, including CYF, education, juvenile justice, and

mental health to deliver a seamless and flexible array of services and support options to families. Leadership from the partner communities and families helps direct program planning, implementation, and evaluation.

The lessons learned from this system of care approach have been very positive. Children and families "do better" when they are involved, educated, and supported by their communities and child-serving systems. For this reason, the Allegheny County Department of Human Services is in the process of applying the system of care values and principles throughout Allegheny County. In addition, the county has received an additional grant to expand the system of care model to youth ages 14 - 21. This program expansion will be initially available in 2004 to youth living in Sto-Rox and Wilkinsburg.

In future years, you'll be hearing more about the system of care approach. If you currently live in one of the five partner communities and would like to learn more about Community Connections for Families, or if you would like more information about systems of care, please call 412-350-3452.

What else might I need to know?

1. Teams, Team Meetings, and Treatment Plans.

Teams

Depending on your child's diagnosis and the treatment recommended, you may be dealing with a number of providers and/or agencies. A case manager may be working with you and others to coordinate services for your child.

A **team** is formed when a number of people representing different providers or agencies work together with you, your child (if appropriate), and other members who you may want to attend to make sure that services are planned, coordinated and implemented.

If your child is receiving services from several different mental health providers, or if your child is receiving services from two or more publicly funded agencies (such as Mental Health and Education), a team called an "interagency team" will be formed.

Team Meeting(s)

Part of the coordination process is to bring you and your child (if appropriate) together with representatives from the providers or agencies that you are working with. This is called a **team meeting** or an **interagency team meeting**.

Members of a team meeting will include you, your child (if appropriate), and the following representatives:

- The County Mental Health Program(s)
- Community Care Behavioral Health Organization (if applicable)
- Children, Youth and Families (CYF) (if applicable)
- Juvenile Justice (if applicable)
- The School District (if applicable)
- Any other agencies providing services
- Your child's psychologist or psychiatrist (if available)
- Other individuals that the family wishes to participate

Because you know your child and family situation best, it is very important that you attend these meetings and that you voice your opinion. The other team members need to hear directly from you. You will have the final say about the services that your child and family will receive.

Getting Ready for a Team Meeting

Everyone on your team will be helpful and supportive, but the first few meetings may seem overwhelming to you. Keep in mind that there is no such thing as a "dumb" or "stupid" question. Request information and ask anything that you want to know more about, or that you do not understand. Write down questions before you go to a meeting. Here are a few examples of questions you may want to ask:

- What do I need to do to help my child?
- What treatment and support services would best help my child?
- What has helped other children like mine?
- What do I do in a crisis?
- Who can I call in the evening or on weekends?

- Will these services improve my child's mental health?
- What should I expect?
- Can I see my child's records and reports?
- What are my rights?

You know your child and family situation best. Be clear about your child's strengths, your needs, your concerns, and what you think will help your child and family the most.

Treatment Plans

At the team meeting, you, your child (if appropriate) and your team will:

- Set goals for your child.
- Develop a **treatment plan** to meet these goals.

The treatment plan will identify the strengths of your child and family; list the issues that are being addressed; identify treatment goals; outline treatment and support services that will be needed; and determine how often the treatment will occur. Your team will also decide how often it should meet in order to make sure that your child is making progress.

2. What If the Treatment Plan Isn't Working?

It can take some time for all of the parts of a treatment plan to be put in place. It will also take some time to determine if the treatment and support services are making things better for your child. **This will require patience on the part of you and your family.** However, sometimes things change, and even the best plan doesn't work as expected. If some part of your child's treatment plan isn't working, tell your case manager or service coordinator. He or she will work with you and the other

members of your team to determine if alternative plans are needed.

For some children, treatment plans based on traditional methods of intervention are not successful. Sometimes there is conflict or disagreement between team members; sometimes there is competition for scarce resources; and sometimes a special service or accommodation is needed that does not currently exist in the system. In this case, and as a last resort, the **Allegheny County Interagency Review** process is used to bring together the family and all providers and systems interacting with the child. A discussion is held to determine:

- What the problem or issue is
- What the needs of the child are
- What can be done or changed to resolve the problem

A plan of action is developed at this review process, and a thirty-day follow-up is made to determine progress.

If you wish to request an Allegheny County Interagency Review, call 412-350-3374, or notify your case manager who will start the review process for you.

3. **Health Insurance Maze.**

Fortunately, you live in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. To date, Pennsylvania has been one of the most progressive states in understanding that a child with mental health problems must have access to the services they need, regardless of insurance coverage and the family's ability to pay for them. The services your child may need can be very expensive. Ongoing therapy, medications, treatment and

support services could very quickly financially ruin a family if they were required to pay for these services out-of-pocket. Here is some information that you need to know about health insurance:

- Private Health Insurance.

If your child's health care coverage is provided by a private health insurance plan that you receive as a benefit through your employer, it is important for you to get a description of the mental health coverage (also called behavioral health coverage) that your plan provides. In most health plans, general health care coverage is different than the mental health coverage. Insurance companies typically set a limit on the services that can be used in a year, or even during a lifetime. There are often higher co pays or deductibles, and a care manager may be assigned by the insurance plan to help and coordinate coverage for services that have been recommended for your child. Most private health insurers also develop "networks" of doctors, therapists and service providers that you can select to treat your child. Usually these networks are fairly comprehensive, but you may find that the doctor or hospital you want to use is not in the network. The key is to learn about and understand what your health insurance plan does and does not cover, and to understand your appeal rights.

Call your health insurance company and ask for information about your child's mental health coverage.

- Public Health Insurance (Medical Assistance)

In Pennsylvania, your child (age 0 - 18) may be eligible for medical assistance coverage for mental health services **regardless of your family income**. Medical assistance coverage is extensive and comprehensive for children with mental health problems.

To apply for medical assistance for your child with mental health problems, call the Department of Public Welfare at 412-565-2146 and ask for an "advocate" to help you through the application process.

If your child receives medical assistance coverage, and lives in Allegheny County, your child is automatically a member of Community Care Behavioral Health Organization (also known as Community Care). This organization manages the health insurance coverage for medical assistance recipients in Allegheny County, and covers treatment and support services related to mental health, as well as drug and alcohol problems.

To learn more about the Community Care Behavioral Health Organization and the services it provides, call 1-800-553-7499.

4. Allegheny Health Choices, Inc. (AHC) and Ombudsman Services.

Allegheny Health Choices, Inc. is an organization that monitors the service provided by Community Care. They work to assure

that children with mental health problems receive the services they need.

If you are a member of Community Care and are having problems getting the services your child needs, or with the care your child is receiving, or if you need help in filing a complaint or grievance, an "ombudsman" can help you. An ombudsman is a person who helps solve problems. To contact the ombudsman at Allegheny Health Choice, Inc., call 1-877-787-2424.

5. Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Depending on your income, resources, and family size, your child may be eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). This is a federal income assistance program through the Social Security Administration for qualified disabled individuals (including infants and children). Your child does not have to be permanently disabled to receive help. For more information, call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213.

6. Legal Rights and the Law

Your Rights:

Mental health law guarantees rights to you and your child. **The Child and Adolescent Services System Program (CASSP) has adopted the following Client/Family Bill of Rights:**

- The Right to be treated with respect.

- The Right to an individualized treatment plan that takes into consideration the needs of the child, the family and significant others.
- The Right to an assessment and treatment plan that is developed to focus on the strengths of your child and your family.
- The Right to receive services that are sensitive and respectful of your culture.
- The Right to receive services which use community resources and develops your child's ability to function within his or her own community.
- The Right of your family to be kept informed of your child's progress and included in all decisions regarding treatment.
- The Right to receive the finest treatment possible to safely address your child's needs.
- The Right to express concerns/grievances and have them addressed quickly.
- The Right to regularly scheduled treatment team meetings in order to ensure open communication related to your child's treatment.
- The Right to privacy and confidentiality in accordance with the most recent laws and policies.

- The Right to be informed of the billing process and treatment costs.
- The Right to make an informed choice when selecting where your child receives treatment and the type of treatment provided.
- The Right to request a change of treatment professionals.
- The Right to refuse treatment. A parent can do this until your child is 14 years old. However, your child is able to make this decision once he or she turns 14 years of age.
- The Right to know the names, roles and credentials of all of the treatment team members.

Other Legal Rights You May Want To Know More About Include:

- If your child is under the age of 14, you must give your permission for him or her to receive mental health treatment.
- If your child is 14 or older, he or she has the legal right to make certain decisions about receiving care.
 - He/she must agree (consent) to mental health treatment.
 - He/she may obtain mental health treatment without your permission.

- No matter what the age, your child or teenager can get help for a drug or alcohol problem without your permission.
- If your child is over 14 and requires treatment, but is unwilling to agree to it, you must get a judge to order the treatment.

Federal and State Laws That Affect Your Child's Rights:

- **The Mental Health/Mental Retardation Act of 1966** requires counties to develop community-based services and outlines the general provisions relating to mental health/mental retardation facilities, admissions and involuntary commitments.
- **The Mental Health Procedures Act of 1976** establishes safeguards for the treatment and rights of individuals with mental health problems, and establishes criteria for people in need of involuntary mental health treatment.
- **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act** prohibits discrimination against any individual, by any agency that receives federal funds, on the basis of disability (including mental health problems).
- **The American Disabilities Act (ADA)** is an antidiscrimination law that protects the civil rights of individuals with disabilities.

- **Pennsylvania Act 68** provides a patient's bill of rights.
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** assures that children with disabilities will have a free, appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs.

Other Legal Resources:

- Statewide resources are available to you if you run into problems concerning your rights or your child's rights. These resources can also provide you with a copy of any law that you are interested in understanding better. For information, call:
 - Disabilities Law Project at 412-391-5225
 - Education Law Center at 412-391-5225
 - Mental Health Association (MHA) at 412-391-3820
 - National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) at 412-366-3788
 - Pennsylvania Health Law Project at 412-434-5637
 - Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health at 1-717-783-8335
 - Pennsylvania Protection and Advocacy at 1-800-692-7443

7. Grievance Policy and Procedure. If you are unhappy or dissatisfied, in any way, with the services being provided by any mental health provider or agency, you have the right to file

a formal grievance. Each provider or agency will have its own grievance process, and you should request a copy of their policy. Hopefully, your grievance(s) will be resolved quickly and to your satisfaction.

8. The Public School System - Special Education

Children spend half of their waking hours in school, a place that demands concentration, proper behavior, the ability to process information quickly, and a host of complicated social interactions with peers and adults. Some children with mental health problems have symptoms or behaviors that make participation in regular school classrooms difficult. If you have concerns about your child's behavior, learning or emotional state, you may want to consider special education services. Special education services are specifically tailored to meet the needs of your child while allowing your child to continue to learn. Special education services can be helpful to children who are very bright, as well as children who may have learning disabilities. In general, special education classes are small, and the teachers have been specially trained to teach children with emotional or learning disabilities.

In order to investigate this option for your child, you should:

- Meet with your child's teacher(s) to discuss your concerns.
- Meet with your child's guidance counselor for assistance in exploring special education.
- Contact the principal to request an assessment of your child for special education services. This request has to be made in writing.

In order to determine if your child is eligible for special education services, the school may recommend an evaluation. This evaluation may include psychological testing and a review of your child's educational progress. There is no cost to the family for this evaluation.

Based upon the results of this evaluation, an **Individualized Education Plan (IEP)** may be developed by the school with input provided by you, your child (if appropriate), your child's teacher(s), the school guidance counselor, and service providers (if appropriate). An IEP describes your child's learning problems and how these problems will be addressed. For an information and resource guide about special education services, call The Education Law Center at 412-391-5225. If you need help in working with your child's school, call the Education Liaison (see page 42) at 412-350-5476 or 412-350-4978. Also, you may call the Mental Health Association at 412-391-3820.

9. **Children, Youth and Families (CYF)**. CYF was set up by state law. It exists to protect children from abuse and neglect. By law, CYF must protect children and provide services to the family when:

- Children have been injured, abused or sexually molested by their parent(s) or caretaker(s).
- Children are not adequately cared for or watched.
- Parents are not able to care for children and no other responsible adult is available.
- Parents need help with their problems or their children's problems.

CYF assists families in effectively resolving issues or concerns that put a child at risk of being harmed. They do this by

supporting and empowering families in creating a safe and nurturing environment for the children. CYF services include:

- Parenting classes
- Counseling
- Assistance with housing applications
- Transportation
- Drug and alcohol rehabilitation
- Training in homemaking and/or home budgeting
- Respite
- Assistance with obtaining material goods (such as food and clothing)
- Referrals to community resources

Some children involved with Children, Youth and Families may have mental health problems. In order to assure that a child receives the appropriate services, a CYF/Interagency Liaison acts as a link between the two systems (see page 42). For more information about the services provided by CYF, call 412-473-2000 or 1-800-932-0313. To report abuse, call 412-473-2000 or 1-800-932-0313. The phone answers 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and you may remain anonymous if you wish.

10. Juvenile Justice System

Occasionally, children with mental health problems break the law and may be arrested.

The Juvenile Justice System handles the supervision of youths between the ages of ten (10) and eighteen (18) who have participated in some form of delinquent activity as reported by the police.

After a child is referred to Juvenile Court by a police report, a probation officer will be assigned to you and your child. A probation officer is assigned to all cases prior to the scheduling of a court hearing. This officer will ask you for basic information about your child and any outstanding issues which might need to be addressed. **It is important to inform the probation officer of your child's involvement with Mental Health Services.** This information will be important if your child is found to be delinquent, and services are needed for your child to assist him/her in maintaining a more positive lifestyle.

At each stage of the Juvenile Court process, your child must be represented by legal counsel. You may obtain your own lawyer, or a public defender will be provided. If your child is receiving services from the mental health or drug and alcohol systems, a representative from these agencies may attend your child's court hearing if you and your lawyer feel that is important to your child's case.

If your child is found guilty of committing a delinquent act, a judge will determine the consequences. The conditions of supervision (consequences) will be specific to your child based on his/her offense. Some conditions may be - but are not limited to - a curfew, community service, counseling, restitution, or placement in a day treatment program, a residential placement (out-of-home), or a state facility.

Phone numbers and contact information that you may need if you are dealing with the Juvenile Justice System are: Shuman Detention Center at 412-350-0170 and the Public Defenders' Office-Juvenile at 412-350-3504. If you have

not been contacted by a probation officer prior to a court hearing, call the Intake/Investigations Department at 412-350-0170.

11. Drug and Alcohol Services Unit

Children with mental health problems are more likely to abuse drugs and/or alcohol than other children especially during the teenage years. The Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services, provides information and referral services to assist any Allegheny County resident requesting help for a child with a suspected or identified drug or alcohol problem. If you need information about prevention, intervention, or treatment for your child, call the Allegheny County Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services at 412-350-3328. If you suspect that your child is using drugs, that there is a crisis situation, or you are concerned for his/her immediate wellbeing or the wellbeing of those around them, call the Crisis Helpline at 1-888-424-2287.

And Finally ... Your Mental Health!

Your Mental Health!

Parenting is a tough job under the best of circumstances. Parenting a child with mental health problems will challenge you beyond every expectation. At some point, during the course of your child's treatment, you will experience:

- Guilt
- Fear
- Anger
- Frustration
- Embarrassment
- Disappointment
- Hopelessness
- Hope

Here are some things that you can do for yourself.

Become an advocate for your child. Many parents feel better if they feel like they are doing something to help their child. Learn all that you can about your child's illness. Talk to other parents who have children with mental health problems. Find out what works and what doesn't work; make sure that the services your child needs are provided in a timely fashion; arrange for meetings if you have concerns.

Love your child. Sometimes it is very difficult to like a child whose behavior is out of control. But always keep in mind that, no matter how difficult it is for you, your child feels bad too. Tell your child often that you love him or her, even if it appears that your love is rejected - it isn't.

Eat right, get some rest, and exercise. Life goes on around a child with mental health problems. You will need to be physically healthy in order to have the stamina to deal with your child. Taking care of yourself may fall to the bottom of the list, so take the time to realize how important it is for you to stay healthy.

Boost your child's self-esteem. Focus on your child's strengths. There will be a lot of attention paid to your child's weaknesses, and a number of people will be working with your child to change those weaknesses to strengths. You alone know your child best, and you can make sure that your child's strengths become the basis for successful treatment.

Don't forget about your other child/children. The brother(s) and/or sister(s) of a child with mental health problems need you just as much. Spend time with all of your children. Be sure that siblings understand what is going on. Answer questions honestly and openly.

Remember your spouse. If you have a live-in partner, take the time to be a couple. Go out to dinner; talk; go for a walk; and spend some time alone. In caring for your child, present a unified front. You may disagree or blame each other for your child's behavior, but, hopefully, you know that the situation is no one's fault. Stick together and work things through.

Laugh. Even in the middle of chaos, you will find things to laugh about if you look for them. Look for them!

Find or start a support group. There are many other parents who have children with mental health problems. Finding these parents and talking with them will make you realize that you are not alone.

Any mental health provider can give you information about support groups that you can attend; or call:

- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) at 412-366-3788 or 1-888-264-7972. This is a nonprofit organization that provides education, support groups and information and referral.

Trust your instincts. You know your child best. Don't underestimate your own ability to understand your child. Your love and support are the most important elements of successfully treating your son or daughter.

Appendix I

Important Telephone Numbers

Emergency Information and Referral

The following programs and services provide 24 hour/7 days a week emergency information and referrals for people in Allegheny County with mental health problems:

Allegheny County Emergency Services (ACES)	1-888-424-2287
Contact Pittsburgh	412-820-4357
Information, Referral and Emergency Services (IRES)	412-350-4456

General Information and Referral

The following programs and services provide general information and referrals to a broad range of mental health services:

Department of Human Services	
Office of Behavioral Health	412-350-4457
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)	412-366-3788
Mental Health Association	412-391-3820
United Way Helpline	412-255-1155
Community Care Behavioral Health Organization (CCBHO)	1-800-553-7499

Appendix II

Family Support Centers in Allegheny County

Braddock Family Care Connection

608 Margareta Street
Braddock, PA 15104
(412) 271-8355 FAX (412) 271-4540

Clairton Family Center

734 Miller Avenue
Clairton, PA 15025
(412) 233-8325 FAX (412) 233-3735

Clairton EHS/ Family Foundations

501 Mitchell Avenue
Clairton, PA 15025
(412) 233-9430 FAX (412) 233-9475

Duquesne Family Center

One Duquesne Plaza
Duquesne, PA 15110
(412) 466-5699 FAX (412) 466-7518

Duquesne Family Support Center

1 Library Place
Duquesne, PA 15110
(412) 469-9870 FAX (412) 469-4009

East Allegheny Family Center

200 Westinghouse Avenue
Wilmerding, PA 15148
(412) 829-6171 FAX (412) 829-6173

Families Focused on Children

2851 Bedford Avenue, 2nd Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
(412) 681-8233 FAX (412) 681-0159

Garfield Family Support Center

5138 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15226
(412) 665-5200 FAX (412) 665-5205

Highlands Family Center

415 4th Avenue
Tarentum, PA 15084
(724) 224-9006 FAX (724) 224-6875

Hill District**Family Foundations/Early Head Start**

2851 Bedford Avenue, 2nd Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
(412) 681-8233 FAX (412) 681-0179

Homewood-Brushton**Family Support Center**

7143 Fleury Way
Pittsburgh, PA 15208
(412) 243-6088 FAX (412) 243-6480

John Heinz Family Support Center

2001 Wyandotte Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
(412) 261-0373 FAX (412) 471-6772

Lawrenceville Family Support Program

5218 Butler Street, P O Box 40204
Pittsburgh, PA 15201
(412) 681-6200 FAX (412) 621-7606

Lincoln Park Family Center

7300 Ridgeview Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15235
(412) 363-5651 FAX (412) 363-6043

McKeesport Family Center

Masonic Building
522 Walnut Street
McKeesport, PA 15132
(412) 672-6970 FAX (412) 672-1619

**McKeesport 7th Ward
Satellite Family Center**

1406 Versailles Street
McKeesport, PA 15132
(412) 672-6122 FAX (412) 672-8114

Mon View Heights Family Center

1 Midway Drive, Apt. F
West Mifflin, PA 15122
(412) 462-4109 FAX (412) 462-6064

**Northview Heights Family
Support Center**

101 Hazlett Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15214
(412) 323-1020 FAX (412) 323-1414

Oakland Family Care Connection

315 Oakland Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 687-6460 FAX (412) 687-7237

Pitcairn Family Support Center

428 Highland Avenue
Pitcairn, PA 15140
(412) 374-9010 FAX (412) 374-9016

Pittsburgh Family Center

320 Cedarhurst Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15210
(412) 488-8044 FAX (412) 488-7527

Positive Parenting Program

701 Chartiers Avenue
McKees Rocks, PA 15136
(412) 771-6460 FAX (412) 771-1056

Providence Family Support Program

3113 Brighton Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15212
(412) 766-6730 FAX (412) 766-6775

Rankin Family Care Connection

Rankin Christian Center
230 Third Street
Rankin, PA 15104
(412) 271-5022 FAX (412) 271-9155

Steel Valley Family Center

17th and Maple Street
Homestead, PA 15120
(412) 461-8012 FAX (412) 461-7645

Sto Rox Family Center

295 Broadway Avenue
McKees Rocks, PA 15136
(412) 771-6817 FAX (412) 771-7964

Sto Rox**Family Foundations/Early Head Start**

710 Thompson Street, Suite 9
McKees Rocks, PA 15136
(412) 771-2810 FAX (412) 771-2825

Turtle Creek Family Care Connection

519 Penn Avenue
Turtle Creek, PA 15145
(412) 823-2060 FAX (412) 823-0179

Wilkinsburg Family Care Connection

710 Mulberry Street
Wilkinsburg, PA 15221
(412) 247-0977 FAX 247-9524

Wilkinsburg Family Center

718 Wallace Avenue
Wilkinsburg, PA 15221
(412) 371-5934 FAX (412) 731-6251

Wilkinsburg Family Support Center

807 Wallace Avenue
Wilkinsburg, PA 15221
(412) 871-7948 FAX (412) 871-7991
Director FAX (412) 871-7990

Appendix III

Acronyms and Definitions

2003

People-First Language

Language is powerful. It reflects, reinforces and shapes our perceptions of people. Words, which reflect positive attitudes and awareness, help develop positive communications. Words about mental health problems have been strongly affected by legal, medical and political terms. Consequently, our daily language is filled with technical terms, which often do not convey the intended social message.

This appendix is intended to help you understand some of the most common **acronyms** and terms used by mental health professionals.

An **acronym** is a word created from the first letters of a phrase or series of words. For example, the **Department of Human Services** is often referred to as **DHS**.

A

ADMINISTRATIVE CASE MANAGEMENT (ACM) - A Case Manager(s) at each Service Coordination Unit who helps to assure that a mental health assessment is done, a treatment and service plan is written, referrals are made and that treatment and support services are received.

ADVOCATE - A person who speaks or writes in support of something or someone.

ALLEGHENY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES [DHS] - This agency provides and administers human services to county residents through the program offices of Behavioral Health; Community Services; Mental Retardation, Children, Youth and Families; and Area Agency on Aging.

ALLEGHENY COUNTY INTERAGENCY REVIEW - This official process is used as a last resort when a child's treatment plan is not working. This review process brings together the family and all providers and systems to identify the problem(s); determine needs; and resolve issues.

ALLEGHENY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES OFFICE OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH (OBH) - Provides a coordinated set of treatment and support services for people with mental health and/or drug and alcohol problems through a number of contracted agencies.

B

BEHAVIORAL DISORDER - A disorder characterized by behaviors which are significantly different, over a long period of time, from the socially acceptable behaviors of others of the same age and situation.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH REHABILITATION SERVICES CHILD AND ADOLESCENTS (BHRSCA) - Official designation of a treatment program that provides therapeutic and behavioral support services to a child or adolescent in his/her home. These services are also known as wraparound services.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES - A relatively new term that refers to both mental health and drug and alcohol rehabilitation services.

BEHAVIORAL SPECIALIST CONSULTANT (BSC) - A mental health professional who writes the treatment plan and supervises the team that provides Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services Child and Adolescents (BHRSCA) in the home.

C

CASE MANAGEMENT (CM) - A service that assists the child and family in obtaining and coordinating services that are needed. A **case manager** is the person who provides this service.

CHILD AND ADOLESCENT SERVICES SYSTEM PROGRAM (CASSP) - Created in 1984 by Congress, this program assists all states (through grants, technical assistance and training) in the development of community-based, coordinated service systems to deal with the mental health needs of children and their families.

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES (CYF) - Established by federal and state law, CYF exists to protect children from abuse or neglect.

COMMITMENT (302) - An involuntary emergency mental health commitment with two steps. (1) The patient is brought for emergency examination involuntarily if specific criteria of clear and present danger to self or others are met. (2) If, upon medical examination, the patient is felt to be a clear and present danger to self or others, admission for up to 120 hours in a designated facility occurs.

COMMITMENT (303) - This is the means by which a patient is maintained in involuntary hospitalization status for a period not to exceed 20 days. This type of extended involuntary emergency treatment must be certified by a judge or mental health review officer.

COMMITMENT (304) - This is the means by which a patient is maintained in involuntary hospitalization status for an extended period of time up to 90 days. Often, this is the type of commitment used when a patient is sent to a state hospital.

COMMUNITY CARE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ORGANIZATION (CCBHO) - This managed care organization oversees the mental health and drug and alcohol health insurance coverage for medical assistance recipients in Allegheny County.

COMMUNITY RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION/HOST HOME (CRR) - Transitional residential programs in community settings, either in a therapeutic foster family or small group home. A CRR host home provides services 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

COMMUNITY TREATMENT TEAM (CTT) - This treatment option is intended for adolescents (age 16 - 25) who have not achieved and maintained mental health stability in the community. A treatment team of mental health professionals provides comprehensive and intensive services to the adolescents in the community where they live in order to prevent hospitalization and/or incarceration.

CONFIDENTIAL - All information provided by the family or child will be private and will not be shared with anyone unless written permission is given by the family or child.

CONSUMER/CLIENT - Anyone using or needing mental health services.

CONTINUUM OF CARE - Refers to the comprehensive and coordinated range of mental health treatment services that are available to a child. It is designed to meet the multiple and changing needs of children with mental health problems.

CULTURALLY COMPETENT - Services that demonstrate respect for individuals, their preferences, attitudes, values and beliefs and traditions.

D

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE (DPW) - A state agency that oversees numerous program areas. The Department oversees all children, youth & families, mental health, mental retardation, income maintenance, medical assistance and social program issues in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL (D & A) - Designation often used for services/programs designed to aid in the recovery of addicted consumers.

E

EARLY INTERVENTION (EI) - Programs which assist developmentally disabled children and their families (infants and young children up to age 6) to develop to their optimal potential.

EMOTIONAL DISORDER - Emotional impairment exhibited by a child or adolescent that disrupts his or her academic, family or interpersonal relationships.

EMPOWERMENT - The ability to exercise influence and control over the services your child receives.

E

FAMILY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH (FBMH) - Comprehensive services designed to assist families in caring for their child or adolescent at home. Services may include treatment for the child and other family members, case management, and family support services.

FAMILY FOCUSED - Focusing on the strengths and capabilities of each individual family.

FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM - A program that works to ensure the healthy development and growth of small children by supporting families in the community where they live.

G

GRIEVANCE - A wrong considered as grounds for complaint, or something believed to cause distress.

I

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN (IEP) - An educational plan that outlines the programs and services that a child may need in order to remove barriers to learning. The IEP includes goals, objectives, types of special help that a child will receive in the classroom, and how the child's progress will be measured.

INPATIENT HOSPITALIZATION - The most intensive and restrictive treatment setting, providing acute treatment interventions, diagnostic evaluations, stabilization and treatment planning.

INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT (ICM) - A service designed to ensure the continuous care and support of clients with severe mental health problems by assisting them in accessing appropriate mental health, social and educational services in order to lead a more stable and healthy life in the community.

INTERAGENCY TEAM (IAT) - A group of people (including the family, the child and representatives from providers and/or

agencies) who work together to make sure that services are planned, coordinated and implemented.

J

JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM - The Allegheny County system that deals with children or adolescents who break the law and are arrested.

L

LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE) - High quality treatment and support services provided in the most natural environment that is available and appropriate.

LEGAL GUARDIAN - A person who is court-appointed to make decisions for another person who has been deemed incompetent to make decisions (financial or personal).

LIAISON - A professional who is specifically trained to work in partnership with children and families, outside agencies and mental health providers.

M

MANAGED CARE - A system of providing health care that oversees all services in order to make sure that proper treatment is provided and that services are not duplicated.

MANAGED CARE PROVIDER - A person, firm or corporation who is providing health care to individuals under agreement with a particular managed care plan.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE (MA) - The federal program which provides, within restriction, medical (and certain medically supervised) care to those in need. In Pennsylvania, this is administered by the Department of Public Welfare.

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS - A broad descriptive term that indicates that a child may have signs and symptoms that affect how he or she thinks, feels, or reacts to everyday situations.

MENTAL ILLNESS - A general term applied to severe emotional problems or psychiatric disorders.

MOBILE CRISIS SERVICES - A crisis intervention team of professionals who, when called, go to the child during a crisis (in the home, at school, or in the community) in order to prevent injury or hospitalization.

MOBILE THERAPIST (MT) - A mental health professional who provides counseling services in the home.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAM (MDT) - A group of clinical staff made up of representatives from different professions, disciplines or service areas.

O

OMBUDSMAN - A person who helps to solve problems.

OUTCOME BASED - A focused treatment approach that allows for clear and measurable results.

OUTPATIENT - Services provided in freestanding mental health offices or clinics. These services include medical examination, diagnosis, care and treatment.

P

PARTIAL HOSPITALIZATION SERVICES (Often referred to as "Partial") - A nonresidential form of intensive treatment provided in a freestanding or school-based program for 3-6 hours per day.

PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN (PCP) - A general medicine, Family Practice or Internal Medicine physician responsible for overseeing the medical care of an individual.

PROBATION OFFICER (PO) - An officer of the court responsible for ensuring that a client follows the terms of his or her probation.

PROVIDER - Qualified individual or agency that provides services.

PUBLIC DEFENDER (PD) - Provides legal counsel to indigent defendants. When appointed by the court, the PD must also furnish legal counsel to persons subject to commitment under the Mental Health and Mental Retardation Act of 1966.

R

RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT FACILITY (RTF) - A 24 hour treatment facility where children and adolescents receive intensive and structured comprehensive mental health services.

RESOURCE COORDINATOR (RC) - A Case Manager providing service in the community to consumers with mental health problems, at a level more frequent than Administrative Case Management, but less so than Intensive Case Management. Key roles include linking the client to support services, serving as a "communications clearinghouse," and advocating for the consumers' wants and needs.

S

SERIOUS EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE/DISABILITY OR DISORDER (SED) --An emotional and/or social impairment that seriously disrupts the child or adolescent's academic, family or interpersonal relationships.

SERVICE COORDINATION UNIT (SCU) - Generally, part of a community mental health center, these provide full service mental health services to those in need in Allegheny County [formerly called Base Service Units (BSU)].

SPECIALIZED CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES - Unique case management programs that are targeted toward certain children or adolescents based on their diagnosis and their specific needs.

STRENGTHS BASED - Treatment and support services that reflect the identified strengths and needs of each child and family.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SAP) - An intervention program designed to identify students who are having school problems due to alcohol or drug use, depression or other mental health problems, and to intervene and refer these students to appropriate community services, if needed.

SUPPORT SERVICES - An array of services designed to enhance a family's ability to care for a child with mental health problems and to prevent out-of-home placement.

I

TARGETED CASE MANAGEMENT (TCM) - The provision of individually appropriate case management services.

THERAPEUTIC STAFF SUPPORT (TSS) - A mental health professional who provides behavioral support and guidance to a child in the home and/or school.

TREATMENT PLAN - A plan that outlines the treatment and support services that are needed to address the mental health problems of a child and his or her family.

TREATMENT SERVICES - Refers to a variety of therapeutic services designed to change behaviors or other conditions related to a child's mental health problems. Also designed to help individuals and/or families to cope with these problems.

W

WRAPAROUND SERVICES - A common term used for treatment services, more formally known as Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services - Children and Adolescents (BHRSCA). These in-home services provide focused therapeutic and behavioral support to the child.