

Health Care Providers: Referrals for Mental Health Services

Community Mental Health Service Providers (CMHSP) provide a variety of **mental** health services when children meet the eligibility criteria for Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED). The local/regional CMHSP determines whether a child has SED by conducting a telephone intake and then, if needed, scheduling an in-person assessment. If a child does not meet SED criteria (see MA Provider Manual Section 1.6 of Behavioral Health and Intellectual and Developmental Disability Supports and Services chapter), the CMHSP can work with the child and family to connect them to mental health services through their health insurance (commercial or Medicaid Health Plan).

NOTE: Individual CMHSP practice may vary – if possible, learn the process for the CMHSP in your area.

NOTE: For access to services for intellectual and developmental disabilities and Autism, see “Refer for Autism, Developmental Disability and Intellectual Disability Eligibility Assessment.”

Usually, a parent/guardian will need to contact the CMHSP directly for the phone intake and then to schedule an assessment appointment. If you as a primary care provider have concerns about a child, you can take the following additional steps:

Step 1: Discuss your concerns with the child and family and provide contact information for the local CMHSP.

- If you have social work staff in your office, s/he may be able to sit with the child’s parent while they make the call from your office.

Step 2: Let the child and family know you will also be contacting the CMHSP to give some information.

Step 3: Ask the child’s parent/guardian to sign a consent for release of information allowing you to give information to the CMHSP and to get information from the CMHSP.

- CMHSP may use their own consent for release form – if so, asking for copies to keep in your office and use when needed will streamline the process.
- When completing consent for release of information forms it is good to be as specific as possible
 - Dates of service (yours or the CMHSP).
 - What kind of information you are releasing and asking for (e.g. treatment summaries, psychiatric evaluations, laboratory work).
 - Include verbal interaction between your office and the CMHSP.

How Do I? – Refer for Evaluation to determine a child’s eligibility for Community Mental Health services

Step 4: Call the CMHSP.

- Provide the child and parent/guardian name.
- Let the staff know you have asked the family to call.
- Let the staff know that the family has signed a consent for release of information and you can send a copy.
- Ask to speak with the Children’s Services Administrator/Supervisor OR ask to speak with the medical team (medical assistant or nursing staff).
- Once connected, describe the reason for referring the family.
- Let the person you are speaking with know the best way to get back in contact.
- Discuss a plan for ongoing communication about assessment and treatment.
- Ask to be informed if the child is not eligible under SED and is referred elsewhere.

Step 5: Follow up with the family.

- Ask if they completed the intake process and what was the outcome.
- Let them know what you have also called and spoken with someone at the CMHSP.