

Integrated Services for Youth with Mental Health Needs

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Introduction

Mental health services for children and adolescents are provided mostly on an outpatient basis. These services are provided both by private and public resource systems. Mental health resources for youth include everything from very limited outpatient therapy to round the clock inpatient services. Through the private health insurance system, parents are frequently able to access only an hour a week of counseling or 24 hour inpatient hospitalization. Many children need more comprehensive services in the community but not out of home placements.

One model that many counties are now using to provide more comprehensive case coordination is called integrated services. Integrated Services Programs for children offer an opportunity to create a comprehensive community based support plan for individuals with severe disabilities. This includes children and adolescents with significant mental health issues.

Integrated Services Programs

State law created provisions for counties to establish integrated services programs (**ISP**) for children with severe disabilities. This statute is often referred to as Children Come First (**CCF**). Although the statute allows for programs to serve any child with severe disabilities, most of the programs have targeted children with emotional disturbance or mental health issues. This is due to a provision in this statute that allows counties to apply for specific state funds if the priority target group is children with severe emotional disorders. To get these funds the coordinating committee must also submit goals during the first year of funding for diverting children with placements outside the home and for reallocating funds from institutional services to community based services. This can be a way for children with severe emotional disorders or significant mental health needs to access appropriate comprehensive community based services and avoid hospitalization or other institutional placement which removes them from their natural environment and supports.

Sec. 46.56, Wis. Stats.

Also called Children Come First

Coordinating committee

Sec. 46.56(3), Wis. Stats.

A county that operates an integrated services program must designate a coordinating committee. The coordinating committee is responsible for establishing interagency agreements between participating agencies including special education, mental health, child welfare, juvenile justice and other agencies. In addition to various service provider

representatives who may be on the coordinating committee, there must be at least two parents of children with disabilities or enough to make parent representation 25%, whichever is greater.

Integrated service plan

Sec. 46.56(8), Wis. Stats.

For each child participating in the program a child and family team creates an integrated services plan which includes the information known about the child's current functioning, both short and long term goals for treatment and support services and a description of the needed services and who will provide them. The plan also includes criteria for measuring the plan's effectiveness, so modifications can be made as needed. The integrated services plan is intended to be an individualized plan provided in the community in the least restrictive and least intrusive setting and manner possible for a particular child, utilizing the strengths and considering the needs of that child and family.



A child or his/her family does not have to be on Medicaid in order to receive supports through an integrated services program. However, some counties may encourage applicants to explore their eligibility for Medicaid as a means for assisting with funding the services.

Also called wrap around services

Integrated services programs are sometimes referred to as wrap around services, as the services are supposed to be designed to "wrap around" the particular individual. It is not based on "this is what this program offers, so take it or leave it." This approach allows the team to plan creatively around a particular child and his/her family. The team approach also keeps communication open between various people involved in the child's life and allows for a coordinated effort, both in planning and when the need to problem solve arises. Additionally this helps avoid a situation where different players can be working at cross purposes when a child has many individuals affecting their lives (parent, teacher, doctor, speech and language clinician, therapist, etc.).

Court ordered vs. voluntary participation

An integrated services plan can also be part of a court order under both the child welfare and juvenile justice codes. Some counties, frequently due to limited funds, will only serve children who are under court jurisdiction. However, one nice thing about the Children Come First statute, is that it doesn't require that a child or family be under court jurisdiction in order to obtain this service.

For more information

Each county has different procedures for enrolling families in their integrated services programs. To find out if your county has a program, you could contact someone at county human services, or ask your child's teacher, doctor, therapist or other service provider. If you cannot locate information through local contacts with school or county officials, you may contact the Bureau of Community Mental Health's Child-Adolescent Services Section at 608-266-6838 to find out whether your county has a program and who to contact.



If your county does not have an integrated services program, you could begin to advocate for one. In counties which do have these programs, it was usually a result of efforts by parents, providers, and county staff. Possible places to start include: contacting the head of your county Department of Human Services, members of your county Human Services Board, or the state Bureau of Community Mental Health's Child-Adolescent Services Section.

Conflict Resolution

Informal conflict resolution

Sec. 46.56(11), Wis. Stats.

Each integrated services program is required to create and utilize an informal process for conflict management. Some examples of informal means to resolve conflict include consultation, mediation and independent assessment. This informal process should be used whenever possible to resolve any issues which arise.

Definition of service coordination agency

Sec. 46.56(1)(m), Wis. Stats.

There is also a formal grievance process that applies to certain decisions made by the service coordination agency. A child that is either a service applicant or recipient (or their parent or guardian or guardian ad litem) may appeal a decision regarding eligibility, denial, termination, reduction or appropriateness of services to the coordinating committee.

Administrative appeals

Sec. 46.56(12), Wis. Stats.

The coordinating committee's decision can be appealed to the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services.