

# ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR MEDI-CAL YOUTH (AGES 0 TO 21)

This document is designed to assist foster youth, caregivers, county staff serving foster youth in navigating the mental health benefits available to youth through the Medi-Cal program. Mental health services provided to children in foster care should be informed and coordinated through a Child and Family Team process. The child's client plan should be revised as the child's needs change over time. Anyone with legal responsibility in the child's life (or a child over age 12) can request mental health services through Medi-Cal by contacting the local county Mental Health Plan (see contact link below).

Foster children under age 21 who are enrolled in Medi-Cal have an entitlement to the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit, which provides comprehensive screening, diagnostic, treatment, and preventive health care services. Medi-Cal recipients may receive "non-specialty" mental health services through Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans, or fee-for-service Medi-Cal providers. For Medi-Cal beneficiaries that meet medical necessity criteria for "specialty" mental health services, services are provided or arranged for by County Mental Health Plans. County Mental Health Plan provided "specialty mental health services" provide a different array of services than those provided under Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans, which may be important for foster youth, and the differences between the two are described below.

## MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING

- A screening usually includes a short series of questions or observations that help determine whether a child should be more formally assessed for any potential mental health conditions.
- Screening may be provided by any licensed health care provider, child welfare social workers, probation officers, the Child Health Disability and Prevention (CHDP) program, a Foster Family Agency or Short Term Residential Therapeutic Program.
- For children enrolled in Medi-Cal managed care plans, plans are required to ensure children receive ongoing screenings to identify any physical or mental illnesses or conditions.
- Anyone with legal responsibility in the child's life (or a child over age 12) may request a child receive a screening.

## MANAGED CARE PLAN COVERED MEDI-CAL

### MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- Individual and group mental health evaluation and treatment (psychotherapy)
- Psychological testing
- Monitoring medications
- Consultation with psychiatrists
- Lab tests, supplies
- Medications and supplements

The plans also provide:

- Diagnosis of any mental health conditions
- Treatment planning
- Referrals to the county mental health plan when a child meets criteria for "specialty" mental health services
- Targeted case management to assist children in accessing necessary medical, social, educational, and other services.
- Help scheduling appointments
- Transportation assistance
- Health education to parents or guardians
- Behavioral Health Therapy for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

## ASSESSMENT

- An assessment includes an interview by a licensed mental health professional to identify any mental health conditions
- A child may be assessed by a county mental health, Medi-Cal managed care plan, or Medi-Cal fee-for service provider
- The assessment helps the provider determine the Medi-Cal delivery system to which a child should be referred for mental health services

## MENTAL HEALTH PLAN COVERED MEDI-CAL SPECIALTY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- Diagnosis of any mental health conditions
- Treatment planning
- Individual and group mental health evaluation and treatment (psychotherapy)
- Monitoring medications
- Targeted case management to assist children in accessing necessary medical, social, educational, and other services
- Rehabilitative services to enable a child to achieve age-appropriate growth and development
- Collateral services to a significant support person
- Day treatment intensive
- Day rehabilitation
- Intensive home-based services
- Intensive care coordination
- Therapeutic Foster Care Services
- Therapeutic behavioral services
- Crisis residential
- Crisis intervention
- Crisis stabilization
- Acute psychiatric inpatient
- Psychiatric health facility
- Referrals to the Medi-Cal managed care plan when a child does not meet criteria for "specialty" mental health services

### County Mental Health Plan Contacts:

<http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/individuals/Pages/MHPCoContactList.aspx>

### County Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans:

<http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/individuals/Pages/MMCDHealthPlanDir.aspx>

In an emergency, call 9-1-1 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255