

## How Do I Obtain Mental Health Support for My Child?

### How do I know when to seek mental health support?

If you observe changes in your child's behavior that concern you, assistance from a mental health professional may be appropriate in determining if the behaviors are developmentally appropriate or if the behaviors pose a genuine cause for concern. Some behaviors that may indicate a need for support include:

- Use of alcohol or drugs
- Skipping school or missing classes
- Difficulty getting along with family or friends
- Mood swings or often feeling "down"
- Changes in dress or appearance
- Not sleeping or sleeping too much
- Loss of interest in activities/hobbies
- A decline in grades
- Talking of death or hurting himself/herself or others
- Often preferring to stay alone
- Frequent irritability or anger

### Who can provide mental health support for my child at school?

The appropriate person to assist you may depend on many factors, including financial resources. Begin by talking to someone at your child's school who is trained in providing mental health support, which may include; school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, or school nurse.

### Are there people in my community who can help?

Persons in your community may include: Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Clinical Social Workers, Licensed Clinical Psychologists, Psychiatrists, and Psychiatric Nurses. These persons may be contacted through:

- School-based health clinics
- Community Mental Health Centers

- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Church or other religious organizations
- Hospitals
- Other community organizations

In addition, persons who work in cooperation with your insurance company, called behavioral health care providers may be accessed through your health care provider

### What are "mental health" services?

School personnel, along with parental/guardian input, can decide upon school mental health services. These services may include a variety of supports such as:

- Within the classroom, a mental health professional may work with your child's teacher to design a positive behavior support program specific to his/her behavior needs. For example, a social skills program to assist your child in learning to get along better with others.
- During the school day, a counselor, social worker, or school psychologist may provide counseling for your child in a group or in an individual setting.
- A community mental health therapist located at your child's school may also provide mental health support services.

In your community, a mental health professional may recommend:

- Individual/group/family therapy
- Services through hospitalization or residential treatment
- Assessment services, which may include psychiatric medication evaluations, drug/alcohol evaluations, or other appropriate consideration.

## How is the level of my child's needs determined?

An initial assessment will be conducted to assist in developing appropriate services. Some components of the assessment may be:

- A family history related to mental health or health issues
- A review of medical information to determine if there may be physical reasons for the behaviors
- A discussion of the specific concerns and how long the behaviors have been occurring
- A discussion of any previous mental health supports that your child has received
- An interview with the child to understand any concerns that he/she may have and to assess their strengths/supports.

## Who will provide the mental health services?

There is a school mental health provider(s) (school psychologist, school social worker, and/or school counselor) within the school building/district. These professionals, with parental/guardian input, will determine who is the most appropriate person/agency to provide the services. If the behaviors are considered to be dangerous to the child or to others, actions will be taken to create a safe environment, first and foremost.

The child's parent/guardian will be able to decide who will provide the service in the community. This decision must be made based on the financial resources available to pay for the services (private insurance, medicaid services required by an Individual Education Plan, etc.) as well as the preferences of the parent/guardian for specific providers.

Questions regarding the availability and procedures to obtain mental health services should be directed to the mental health personnel working in your child's school.

## What can I do to ensure the person providing services is qualified to provide those services?

School mental health professionals must have a professional license through the Colorado Department of Education. If you are not satisfied with these services, first talk with the school team of professionals. If your child qualifies for special education services, you may also discuss your concerns with the Principal at your child's school or with the Director of Special Education in your school district.

If, after discussing your concerns with these individuals, you are unable to come to a resolution, you can file a complaint with the licensing department at the Colorado Department of Education, by calling (303) 866-6628 or follow due process procedures which can be obtained through your school district.

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Information about persons providing mental health services in your community can be obtained by calling the Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies at 303/894-7437 or by going to the DORA website: [www.dora.state.co.us/Mental-Health](http://www.dora.state.co.us/Mental-Health).

Special thanks to RATC, who assisted with the content and editing of this *Fast Fact*; and additional resources may be obtained by contacting: Regional Assessment & Training Center, Inc. (RATC), 3520 W. Oxford Ave., Denver, CO 80236, 303/761-0193.