

Accessing County Children's Mental Health Services For Your Child

Having a child with emotional or behavioral problems creates many challenges for parents. Because it is often difficult to distinguish between a troubling behavior and a serious emotional problem or mental illness, parents may not know when they can access county services.

In the state of Minnesota, all children diagnosed with a severe emotional disturbance (SED) are eligible for mental health services under the Minnesota Comprehensive Children's Mental Health Act (MCCMHA). All counties must follow the criteria outlined in the MCCMHA to determine if a child qualifies for services and children's mental health case management. However, since Minnesota operates under a county-based delivery system, the way in which services are provided may vary from county to county.

To find out if your child is eligible for any services through the county, call your county social services agency and ask for children's mental health. If your child does not have a mental health diagnosis, he or she will need a mental health assessment, which evaluates your child's functioning at home, at school and in the community. A mental health assessment can be arranged by the county. Funding the mental health assessment is individually determined; based on county criteria, parent income, and insurance benefits.

If your child is eligible for services, your family will be assigned a children's mental health case manager. This person will work with you to determine what services your child and family will receive.

The twelve specific services required under the Minnesota Comprehensive Children's Mental Health Act (MCCMHA) are:

- Education and prevention services
- Mental health and identification and intervention services
- Emergency services

- Outpatient services
- Family community support services
- Day treatment services
- Residential treatment services
- Acute care hospital inpatient treatment services
- Screening
- Case management
- Therapeutic support of foster care
- Professional home-based family treatment

To receive a copy of the MCCMHA, call the Department of Human Services, Children's Mental Health Division at (651) 431-2321 or www.dhs.state.mn.us.

As a parent, you can accept or refuse any services offered to you by the county under the MCCMHA. You can discontinue county services at anytime except if your child receives services because of a referral from child protection or juvenile justice.

If you have requested mental health services from the county under the MCCMHA and those services have been denied, not provided within a reasonable time, or the county has ended existing services, you can appeal the county's decision. The county is required by law to inform you in writing and within a reasonable time of denied requests and of your right to appeal. You can then appeal in writing to the Commissioner of Human Services. To reach the Office of Appeals at the Department of Human Services, call 651-296-5764. Your appeal must be submitted within 30 days of your receipt of the county's written denial.

For more information on county children's mental health services or to receive the number for your county's social services intake line, call the Department of Human Services, Children's Mental Health Division at (651) 431-2321, or PACER Center at 952-838-9000 (metro) and 888-248-0822 (toll-free in MN).