

# Mental Health and Behavioral Health Services for My Child

## *Treatment and Program Options for My Child*

### What Treatment and Programs Are Available?

There are many programs and treatment options for children and teens who struggle with mental health challenges. Parents and caregivers should not feel embarrassed or afraid to seek help for a child. Starting early and partnering with your child's primary care doctor to find the right treatment and services can make a life-long difference for a child.

### Treatment Options

There are two primary types of treatment, **psychotherapy and medication**.

- **Psychotherapy**, also known as “talk therapy,” is when a person speaks with a trained therapist in a safe and confidential environment to explore and understand feelings and behaviors and gain coping skills.<sup>1</sup> Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is one form of psychotherapy used commonly for children with mental health challenges. To learn more go the National Institute of Mental Health website at [nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/psychotherapies](http://nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/psychotherapies)
- **Medications** may be an important part of your child's treatment plan. While school may recommend medication, your child's doctor will need to determine if medication is appropriate. The doctor (usually a psychiatrist or primary care doctor) can write a prescription, closely monitor your child and adjust the dose if needed. **Don't be afraid to ask questions or contact the doctor if you are concerned that your child is having side effects.** Be aware that a new medication can take weeks before changes are seen, so be patient. Go to [parentsmedguide.org](http://parentsmedguide.org) to learn more.

### Program and Treatment Settings

Mental Health programs and services can be provided in a variety of settings for children and teens. A few examples include private practice, community mental health agencies, residential care centers and psychiatric inpatient units. To find programs and agencies in your area contact Wisconsin First Step at **1-800-642-STEP (7837)** or [www.mch-hotlines.org/wisconsin-first-step](http://www.mch-hotlines.org/wisconsin-first-step)

- **Private Therapy Practices** - Individual, family and group therapy sessions are held in various settings, most commonly **private practice**. A professional in private practice may work out of an office, clinic or his or her home<sup>2</sup>. Mental health professionals who provide therapy in private practice may include: psychiatrists (medical doctors), clinical psychologists, marriage and family counselors and clinical social workers. Go to [mentalhealthamerica.net/types-mental-health-professionals](http://mentalhealthamerica.net/types-mental-health-professionals) to learn more.

This fact sheet was developed by Family Voices of Wisconsin – [familyvoicesofwisconsin.com](http://familyvoicesofwisconsin.com)  
in partnership with the Office of Children's Mental Health - [children.wi.gov](http://children.wi.gov)

<sup>1 & 2</sup> NAMI - [www.nami.org/Learn-More/Treatment/Treatment-Settings](http://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Treatment/Treatment-Settings)

- **Community Mental Health Agencies** provide outpatient services and supports which could include counseling, evaluations, case management, medication management and referrals to resources and public and private supports. Most agencies accept Medicaid/BadgerCare and private insurance.
- **Residential Care Centers** provide both short-term (a few days) and long-term treatment. Residential programs may provide evaluation, psychotherapy, educational programming, respite or other intensive therapies.
- **Psychiatric Inpatient Units** are hospital-based programs that provide crisis mental health, evaluation, therapy/counseling and other treatment services.

## County Mental Health Programs

**County Mental Health Programs** provide supports and services for children and teens with significant behavioral, emotional or mental health challenges. These programs are publicly funded, primarily through Wisconsin Medicaid. Many county-based programs in Wisconsin incorporate the “Wraparound” concept. Wraparound programs, also called [Coordinated Services Teams](#), value the family voice, choice and natural supports. [Comprehensive Community Services](#) or other recovery programs may also be available in your county. Contact your county human services department to learn more.

## Crisis Mental Health

If a child or teen is in danger of doing harm to himself/herself or others they may need crisis mental health services. There are hospital inpatient and outpatient settings. Families can find available programs by calling **WI First Step**. There are also free **crisis hotlines**, like the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**, that are available day or night. If you need to call 911 in an emergency, ask that a Crisis Intervention Trained (CIT) police officer respond. If you have written information about your child, like a care plan, have it ready and available for the officers who respond. To learn more go to [Calling 911 and Talking with Police](#) .

## Where Can I Learn More?

The following can help you learn more about treatment options for your child:

**National Institute of Mental Health**- [nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/treatment-of-children-with-mental-illness-fact-sheet/index.shtml](http://nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/treatment-of-children-with-mental-illness-fact-sheet/index.shtml)

**SAMHSA treatment directory** - [samhsa.gov/treatment/mental-disorders](http://samhsa.gov/treatment/mental-disorders)

**NAMI Treatment Options** - [nami.org/Learn-More/Treatment](http://nami.org/Learn-More/Treatment)

### If you have questions or need help finding services contact the following agencies:

- **Regional Centers for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs**, a network of 5 centers dedicated to supporting families who have children with special needs - [dhs.wisconsin.gov/cyshcn/regionalcenters.htm](http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/cyshcn/regionalcenters.htm)
- **Wisconsin First Step**, a statewide information and referral hotline, can assist families with finding mental health providers and other supports at **1-800-642-STEP (7837)** or [www.mch-hotlines.org/wisconsin-first-step](http://www.mch-hotlines.org/wisconsin-first-step)
- **Wisconsin Family Ties** provides support and assistance to families who have children with mental health or behavioral health challenges. They can be reached at **1-800-422-7145**.