

# Children's Mental Health in Wisconsin

## Medicaid Matters!

### The Issue: Potential Medicaid Cuts and Restructuring

In 2017, there were various House and Senate bills and federal budget proposals that would have resulted in significant funding reductions and limitations on Medicaid in Wisconsin. Per-capita caps or block grants would have altered the structure and promise of Medicaid, and the proposed federal funding cuts would have been massive. Caps or block grants would destroy the promise that Medicaid will be available to meet the demonstrated behavioral health needs of children who qualify, and the level of cuts would make it impossible for states to meet those needs. Though the 2017 proposals did not pass, **Medicaid is still at risk.**

### Children's Mental Health in Wisconsin: The Stakes are High

- One in five children nationwide has a diagnosable mental health disorder. In Wisconsin, mental health disorders affect an estimated 200,000 children and youth.
- Without identification and intervention, childhood mental health disorders can spiral into school failure, poor employment opportunities, and poverty in adulthood.
- Untreated mental illness increases a child's risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system—two-thirds of boys and three-quarters of girls in juvenile detention have at least one mental disorder.
- Wisconsin's youth rate of major depressive episodes is on the rise, and is in the top 20% relative to other U.S. states, while Wisconsin's youth suicide rate exceeds the national average.

### Medicaid is Key to Children's Mental Health in Wisconsin

- Medicaid is the single largest funder of behavioral treatment nationwide.
- Children with behavioral health needs represent 11 percent of the children on Medicaid but account for over a third of expenditures for children.
- Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) provide health care and long-term supports to one in three Wisconsin children.
- In Wisconsin, nearly 2/3 (63%) of children who access mental health services do so via Medicaid.
- Many different Medicaid programs and services are involved in children's mental health care in Wisconsin, including BadgerCare, Katie Beckett, Children's Long Term Supports (CLTS), Comprehensive Community Services (CCS), and school mental health services.

### Unmet Needs Remain

- An estimated 68,000 children and youth with mental health disorders are not receiving any treatment or services, and still more are not receiving sufficient services to meet their needs.
- Low Medicaid reimbursement rates for outpatient therapy contribute to a significant provider shortage for mental health services in Wisconsin.
- One in four children on the wait list for Children's Long Term Support qualifies for services due to severe emotional disturbance. Medicaid per-capita caps could reverse the recent state budget progress on ending the wait list.

### No Cuts, No Caps!

**Wisconsin Family Ties strongly opposes any proposal to establish block grants or per capita caps in Medicaid.**



*Wisconsin's family voice for children's mental health*  
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