

KANSAS MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

.....*Speaking with one voice to meet the critical needs of people with mental illness*

Children and Mental Health in Kansas

Position: Statewide services for ALL children who need health, mental health, and substance abuse care must be supported in the budget. Parents must receive the care they need at accessible times and locations to keep their children at home and in schools, reducing the need for expensive out-of-home placements.

The Problem: Many families are underinsured or uninsured. Parents often cannot find affordable services. They struggle with the new managed care systems initiated in 2013 and scramble to secure services when funds have been cut to agencies providing those services. As many as 70,000 (10%) Kansas children under 18 have emotional/behavioral problems. Around 5% or 35,000 have SED, or Serious Emotional Disturbance, requiring services that may include hospitalization and/or residential treatment. National data suggests that about half of these children do not receive the care they need.

Why this matters: Children with SED are at great risk for dropping out of school, expulsion, teen pregnancy, foster care and, like adults, face substance abuse and incarceration. When services are not available or do not work, parents may lose custody of their children. The child may lose his/her family, school, or home. However, with services such as parent information and peer support, parents and children can learn to manage symptoms and navigate bureaucracies, helping children remain in the most cost effective placement, their own home and local schools.

The bottom line: Kansans value the right of children to live with their family in their home community and attend their neighborhood school. We ask the Legislature to:

- Maintain Home and Community Based Services and funding for Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTFs).
- Maintain parent education and support so families learn how to manage their children's symptoms and access services throughout the continuum of care.
- Increase training for parents, teachers and service providers to identify mental illness; provide evidence-based services, such as wraparound and positive behavior supports.
- Expand regional crisis services so families can participate in treatment with their child.
- Return funds for family centered system of care to community mental health centers.

Need more information? Drill deeper into this issue on the back of this page.

As many as 70,000 Kansas children under 18 live with serious emotional disturbance and are at risk for school dropout or expulsion, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and out-of-home placements such as foster care juvenile detention.

The rest of the story about children's mental health in Kansas

Parents struggling to cope with service systems and options may be angry, isolated, frustrated, and feel blamed. These parents need information about available models of care. It may also be necessary to provide help in evaluating these models to determine if they are appropriate for their child, and in helping the child apply his/her treatment to improve their life at home and in the community. Help to evaluate the treatments' impact, in all locations, and aid in working with teachers, and participating in school planning meetings are also needed. More information on the overall health of Kansas children can be found in The State of America's Children® 2014 Report. On a state-by-state basis, the report provides key data showing alarming numbers of children at risk.

Securing mental health services for Kansas children/adolescents is difficult, in part, because of the many systems that offer those services and the recent legislative funding cuts to programs in these agencies.

Five state agencies provide services and oversight regulations for children who have mental illness. These organizations do not connect in ways that help day to day services to families.

- 1) Department of Children and Families (DCF) oversees children in foster care (0-18) and provides independent living assistance for youth transitioning from foster care.
- 2) The Kansas Department of Corrections, Juvenile Services (KDOC/JS) serves children (10 and older) with mental illness in both institutional and community oversight programs.
- 3) Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) serves children with disabilities aged 0-3, and Medicaid oversight through KanCare managed care organizations: Amerigroup, Sunflower and United.
- 4) Department of Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) oversees the programs of the state's community mental health providers in services they offer children, including the Medicaid waiver programs (HCBS for Children with Serious Emotional Disturbance [SED] and Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities [PRTF]).
- 5) Department of Education (KSDE) serves school age children with SED if the mental illness interferes with the child's ability to function in academic settings.

The Coalition supports state and community level collaboration and planning among these agencies with funding for the comprehensive array of services listed above; increased training of teachers and community providers to expand experienced staff to work directly with children with the most severe needs; and parent to parent and youth to youth peer mentoring to provide assistance to families so they can connect with needed services.