

THE WHO, WHAT AND HOW OF CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH

WHO?

Child psychiatrist: A medical doctor who is able to diagnose, treat, and work to prevent mental disorders in children. A psychiatrist can prescribe medications, and provide psychiatric testing and therapy.

Child psychologist: A licensed individual who helps children with mental and behavioral disorders, as well as children who have experienced traumatic events. A psychologist is not a medical doctor and therefore, cannot prescribe medications.

Developmental pediatrician: A pediatrician who addresses concerns about your child's developmental, behavioral, social or learning challenges, including autism, developmental delays, neurological conditions and intellectual disabilities.

Dietitian/nutritionist: An expert in human nutrition and diet regulation who advises people on healthy eating. Some pediatric dietitians also help with breastfeeding, nutrition care for preemies, uncovering food allergies or food sensitivities, and managing nutrition for children with special health care needs.

Mental health practitioner: An individual who works under the direction and supervision of a licensed health professional, providing home- and community-based mental health services.

Mental health professionals: Licensed workers including: licensed independent clinical social worker (LICSW), a licensed psychologist (LP), licensed professional clinical counselor (LPCC) and licensed marriage and family therapist (LMFT). These individuals are able to complete diagnostic assessments to determine appropriate diagnoses and treatment plans.

Music therapist: A therapist trained to use music as a form of therapy to address a client's needs, such as facilitating movement and physical rehabilitation; motivating the client to cope with treatment; providing emotional support; and providing an outlet for expressing feelings.

Occupational therapist (OT): A licensed therapist trained to provide assessment and therapy to correct physical and psychological problems that interfere with activities and tasks of daily living such as feeding, swallowing, sensory integration, fine motor (hands/fingers) skills, etc.

Pediatric neurologist: A medical doctor who specializes in diseases of the nervous system (brain and spinal cord) in children.

Physical therapist (PT): A licensed therapist who provides services that help restore function, improve mobility, relieve pain and prevent or limit permanent physical disabilities of children with chronic conditions, injuries or disease.

Speech therapist: A health professional trained to evaluate and assist patients to overcome voice, speech, language and swallowing disorders.

WHAT?

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA): A treatment model of teaching skills to children with autism through intensive therapy using behavioral principles.

Activities of daily living: Includes activities that are typically associated with self-help tasks such as eating, dressing, grooming or domestic activities such as cooking and cleaning.

Assessment: Collecting and bringing together information about a child's needs, which may include social, psychological and education evaluations used to determine services; a process using observation, testing and test analysis to determine an individual's strengths and weaknesses in order to plan his/her services. "Assessment" can refer to diagnostic assessment, a psychological evaluation or a neuropsychological evaluation. (See the "How" section for further information on the different types of assessments.)

Autism Spectrum Disorder: A disability category characterized by an uneven development profile and a pattern of qualitative impairments in areas of social interaction, communication and restricted repetitive and stereotypical patterns of behavior, interests and play. Characteristics can present themselves in a wide variety of combinations.

Case management: Focuses on accelerating the use of available services to restore or maintain independent functioning to the fullest extent possible. In pursuing this goal, case management helps people connect to needed services and supports within the community.

Case manager: An individual who organizes and coordinates services and support for children with mental health problems and their families (service coordinator, advocate and facilitator).

Children's mental health: A state of emotional and psychological well-being. Mental health begins at birth. Everyone has mental health needs and care varies to fit those needs.

Consent: Agreement to receive treatment following the act of informing the client or guardian about the nature and character of proposed treatment, anticipated results of treatment and alternative forms of treatment.

Day treatment: Includes special education, counseling, parent training, vocational training, skill building, crisis intervention and recreational therapy.

Diagnosis (Dx): The identification of a disease or problem from signs and symptoms.

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 5th Edition (DSM-V): Used for diagnosis of all mental health diagnoses.

Diagnostic Assessment (DA): Used for diagnosis of mental health conditions.

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE): ECFE offers a variety of classes and resources for parents and children birth up to kindergarten. Programs are offered by every Minnesota school district.

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE): ECSE is a basic special education program that provides a free and appropriate public education for children whose special needs and/or impairments require more intensive interventions and supports than a typical preschool classroom can provide.

Group treatment: Set of face-to-face activities provided by one or more staff under the supervision of a mental health professional to two or more clients. Activities are designed to help a client attain goals as described in the client's treatment plan.

Home-Based services: Services provided in a family's home for either a defined time or for as long as necessary to deal with mental health concerns.

Individual Education Plan (IEP): An education plan for school-aged children, similar to the IFSP, but more focused on the child's goals rather than the family goals.

Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP): An interagency document written by all team members who work with the child and family including needs, strengths, goals and services.

Individual Interagency Intervention Plan (IIIP- Triple IP): An option for children and families to create a coordination plan when working with two or more agencies, very similar to the IFSP for children age birth to three.

Inpatient treatment: Mental health care provided 24-hours-per-day within a general hospital, psychiatric hospital or residential treatment facility.

Intake: The first step in a child's assessment by an educational or medical team. A process of gathering information that lets the team know a parent's concerns about a child's development.

Respite care: A service that provides a break for parents who have a child with a serious emotional disturbance. Some parents may need this help every week. Care can be provided in the home or in another location.

Serious emotional disturbance (SED): Diagnosable disorders in children and adolescents that severely disrupt daily functioning in the home, school or community.

Therapeutic foster care: Community-based, home-like settings that provide intensive treatment services to a small number of young people working on issues that require 24-hour supervision.

Therapy: Treatment meant to cure or rehabilitate physical, mental or behavioral problems.

Wraparound services: A "full service" approach to developing services that meet the mental health needs of individual children and their families.

HOW?

Through these various types of assessments, the best route of mental health care can be determined for your child.

Diagnostic assessment: A written evaluation conducted by a mental health professional to determine whether a child or youth has a mental health disorder. The mental health professional interviews the child and/or family to gather information about the child's life situation, such as:

- effects of child's symptoms on ability to function in home, school and community;
- onset, frequency, duration and severity of current symptoms;
- history of current mental health problem (developmental incidents, strengths, stressors, etc.); and
- relevant family and social history.

A diagnostic assessment typically does not include psychological testing. However, a diagnostic assessment plus testing, indicates an evaluation.

Educational assessment: Informal and formal testing pertaining to the basic senses; social, emotional and behavioral development; cognitive development (play skills); physical and motor development (muscles); and self-help skills of a child.

Neurological assessment: Testing pertaining to the structure and disease of the nervous system (brain and spinal cord) usually performed by a pediatric neurologist.

Neuropsychological assessment: An assessment of how one's brain functions. A neuropsychologist looks at all data from the evaluation to determine a pattern of cognitive strengths and weaknesses and, in turn, to understand more about how the brain is functioning. Neuropsychological tests evaluate functioning in a number of areas including: intelligence, executive functions (such as planning, abstraction, conceptualization), attention, memory, language, perception, sensorimotor functions, motivation, mood state and emotion, quality of life, and personality styles.

Psychological assessment: Testing pertaining to the study of the mind in all of its relationships, both normal and abnormal processes; usually performed by a child psychologist. Psychological evaluations can be general (i.e. examining all possible mental health conditions) or specific, such as autism evaluations.

Psychiatric assessment: Testing pertaining to the study, diagnosis and prevention of mental illness usually performed by a child psychiatrist.

Screening: A process of gathering social and biographical information, direct observations and data from specific psychological tests about a person in a mental health care setting with the purpose of creating a mental health care plan.