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COMMUNITY PSYCHIATRIC SUPPORT SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

WHAT ARE CHILDREN'S COMMUNITY PSYCHIATRIC SUPPORT SERVICES AND WHAT CAN THEY ACCOMPLISH?

Raising children to become responsible, productive, fulfilled adults can be a challenge. Many families struggle with their children's emotional problems, school problems or unruly behavior. Sometimes children's personal problems are so longstanding or complex that they need various forms of specialized services and support. Children's Community Psychiatric Support Services (also known as Children's CPS or Children's Case Management Services) are ongoing types of mental health service designed to make sure that children with complex, multiple needs receive the kinds of care and services that will allow them to continue to live at home and function at their best. Children's CPS services focus on locating and coordinating all the types of services those children may need from not only the Counseling Center, but from other health professionals, schools, courts and social agencies.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM MY CHILDREN'S CPS CASE MANAGER?

- Children's CPS services are provided by case managers who are licensed mental health professionals. Children's CPS case managers provide valuable guidance and personal support to children and their families; but their main function is to help set up and coordinate all of the various types of care and services that your child may need and to make sure those services are as helpful as possible.
- Your children's CPS case manager will usually meet with you and your child in your home, in your child's school and in other community settings, instead of in a traditional mental health agency office.
- Your children's CPS case manager will meet with you and your child at times that are mutually agreeable. However, he/she will also be available to you and your child as unexpected questions or needs might arise in between appointment times.
- Your children's CPS case manager will listen carefully to understand your family situation and your child's needs and will provide caring support and direction to help you and your family discover solutions and make decisions that will work best for you.
- No matter what you say or do, your children's CPS case manager is not likely to judge you or any family member as persons. However, he/she may suggest different ways of behaving or looking at problems. At times, it might feel like your children's CPS case manager is pushing or challenging you, but this is normal and often a sign of future progress.
- At the outset, your children's CPS case manager will help you set treatment goals for your child. With clear goals, children's CPS services can be much more successful. Your children's CPS case manager will also occasionally ask you to assess progress toward those goals.
- In some cases, your children's CPS case manager might suggest that you or a family member see one of the agency's psychiatrists to prescribe certain kinds of medication to help improve functioning or emotional well-being. However, if you or another family member agrees to take medication, realize that medications are only for symptom relief. By themselves, they do not solve the underlying problems causing the

symptoms. If you or a family member uses medication, it is very important to continue with your regular children's CPS services and any other mental health services while taking your medication.

- Your children's CPS case manager may also sometimes make "homework assignments" for you and your family members to do between sessions to practice new skills. Depending on your child's needs, your children's CPS case manager might suggest other kinds of additional treatment services that might be helpful and facilitate the arrangements. Your children's CPS case manager and all other professionals from The Counseling Center keep all information about you and your family, *even* the fact that you're in therapy, in strict confidence. They will not share any information about you or family members with anyone outside of The Counseling Center without written permission. The only exceptions would be (a) if you are under 18 years old or a dependent adult (in which case, parents or other legal guardians *have* the right to know about your therapy), (b) if you or another family member shares information that raises concern about your or someone else's safety or (c) if professionals from The Counseling Center are ordered by a court of law to provide information about you or your family members.

HOW MUCH TIME DOES CHILDREN'S CPS SERVICES TAKE?

The frequency of contact with your children's CPS case manager will depend on your family situation and your child's needs. Contacts may occur only for an hour or so once *every* several weeks, or can run several hours or more *several* times a week.

HOW CAN I MAKE CHILDREN'S CPS SERVICES SUCCESSFUL FOR MY CHILD?

Children's CPS services cannot guarantee results. You and your child will get as much out of it as you put into it. To help assure success, you and your child will need to be completely honest and open with your children's CPS case manager about your experiences, thoughts and feelings.

- Be on time for all scheduled appointments. Your children's CPS case manager may look at missed appointments or cancellation with less than 24-hour *advance* notice as signals that you or your child is not ready for change.
- While you and your child are receiving children's CPS services, don't abuse alcohol or drugs and be sure to take any medications only as prescribed. Abuse of legal, illegal or prescription chemical substances, is one of the most common reasons why any type of mental health service is unsuccessful.
- Don't drop out too early. It's OK to *have* uncomfortable thoughts or feelings, to feel frustrated and to be tempted to quit, especially in the early stages of CPS services. But experience shows that, if you can push beyond those thoughts and feelings, you and your child can make significant gains.
- *Above* all, remember that the only person who can make changes happen for you and your child is you. Your children's CPS case manager can be a *valuable* assistant as you attempt to make positive changes in your and your family's life. But, in the end, you are responsible for your own decisions.