



# Getting the Right Help

**The first step in accessing care for your child with mental health needs is usually an initial referral.**

**21 percent of children between the age of 9 to 17 have a diagnosable mental or addictive disorder.<sup>1</sup>**

## What you need to know

Here are a few things that you should know when meeting with a provider for the first time.

- Most programs and services have eligibility criteria.
- You may be asked to bring your child to the first visit.
- Someone may want to talk with your child alone. It is important that both you and your child feel comfortable before agreeing to do this.
- Most programs have a handbook that explains how the program works. Be sure to ask if you do not receive any additional information.

1. Dept of Health and Human Services, 2001 — Report of the Surgeon General's Conference on Children's Mental Health: A National Action Agenda).

- The people you will meet with want to help your child and family. They will encourage you to speak up and ask questions on behalf of your child and family.

## What to ask

Here are a few questions that can be asked during your first meeting with a provider.

- What services and support is available, and when and where can my child and family get them?
- How is eligibility for services determined?
- How much do services cost and where can I get help to pay for them?
- Who will watch my children while I complete the paperwork and go to meetings?
- How often will my child and family get services, and how long can we continue?
- How do I get help if there is a crisis—especially at night or on the weekend when the office is closed?
- How do I find respite care and other support to help me care for my child at home?

## What you can do

- Schedule the first visit at your (and your child's) convenience. Bring:
  - Your identification such as driver's license, social security number or birth certificate.
  - A notebook to keep track of questions, information and contacts.
  - Proof of medical insurance, a Medicaid card or evidence of your need for financial assistance (such as a pay stub or rent receipt).

- You may want to ask someone you trust (for example, a parent advocate or family member) to come with you.
- Answer questions honestly and give accurate information about your child's strengths and needs.
- Request information and ask anything you want to know more about or do not understand.
- Write down your questions before you go to the meeting.
- Write down the answers to your questions and the names and phone numbers of people you want to get in touch with, or who will be working with your child and family.
- Get a brochure or write down information about the agency's services, fees, payment options, procedures and appeal process.
- Request a written explanation if you are told that your child and family are not eligible for services.
- Do your own homework. Get another opinion and ask for a referral to another service or program that could help you.

## What you can expect

You will be asked a lot of questions about your child and family. The intake worker will want to know things such as:

- What things your child does well;
- What you think the problems are and how they affect your family;
- What you want help with;
- What kind of insurance you have or how the services will be paid; and/or
- Who or what has been helpful in the past.

## You will be asked to sign forms such as:

- Permission for your child to be tested;
- Permission to gather or release information; or
- An agreement to accept and pay for service.

## Contact Us

Your program provides access to tools and other resources online or call us directly to speak to a professional counselor who is available everyday and at any time to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.

## Resources

### **National Alliance on Mental Illness**

[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

### **National Institute of Mental Health**

[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

This document is for your information only. It is not meant to give medical advice. It should not be used to replace a visit with a provider. Magellan Health does not endorse other resources that may be mentioned here.