

## Support for Families

Children's mental health problems can be very stressful for families. It can be tough to find people who really understand what you're going through. If you need support, there are several resources in the community. One option is the Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PAL).

Many PAL staff members are also parents of children with mental illness. PAL offers education, advocacy, and support for families with children who have mental health needs. Specifically, PAL offers:

- Parent support groups all over the state;
- Help to families so they can get the services they need for their children; and
- Information for families about mental health issues and treatment options.

To reach PAL, call the Parent Resource Network (PRN) Line at 1-866-815-8122. You can also visit them online at [www.ppal.net](http://www.ppal.net).



# How's Your Child's Mental Health?

## Your Primary Care Clinician Wants to Know!

### For MassHealth PCC Plan Members

Please note that you can call MBHP to have this publication read to you or if you want to have a Spanish version sent to you. All written materials sent to Members are also available in Spanish, and can also be read to you by a Community Relations Representative.

For copies of materials in English, Spanish, or for oral interpretations into other languages or to have written materials read to you, please call the **MBHP Community Relations Line at 1-800-495-0086 (press 4, then 1 to skip prompts)**, Monday through Thursday, 8a.m.-5p.m., and Friday, 9:30a.m.- 5p.m. (English and other languages).

To find a mental health provider, call the **MBHP Clinical Access Line at 1-800-495-0086 (press 4, then 2 to skip prompts)**, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.



Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership  
150 Federal Street, 3rd Floor  
Boston, MA 02110  
617.790.4000

When your child or adolescent has a stomach ache, a rash, or a fever, most people know that their primary care clinician (PCC) can help. But what if you have concerns about your child's mental health?





### You may notice your child or adolescent:

- Often seems unhappy, angry, or withdrawn, and nothing seems to help;
- Seems distracted and restless and can't sit still as long as other children of the same age;
- Is falling behind in school work or has problems in the classroom;
- Puts him or herself down and seems to feel worthless;
- Has few friends and doesn't get along with family members;
- Seems to be upset and highly stressed about family problems;
- Shows signs of using drugs or alcohol; or
- Is making comments about suicide.

### Your PCC can help!

It's best to mention these issues as soon as possible to your PCC. Your pediatrician, family physician, or nurse practitioner considers your child's mental health as important as physical health. A healthy child means a healthy body and a healthy mind. You can't have one without the other!

You can see a mental health specialist without talking to your PCC. However, talking to your PCC can be a very helpful place to start if you have mental health concerns about your child or adolescent. Doctors and nurses are trained and have experience in how children normally grow and develop. They know what to expect at different ages, and they know about

the most common mental health problems that your child may face.

Your PCC will not make you feel embarrassed if you want to discuss your child's mental health issues. These problems are very common and can happen in any family. Your PCC can help you find treatments that work.



### What will your PCC or pediatrician do?

The first thing your doctor or nurse will do is to ask you some questions about your child's behavior. Depending on your child's age, your doctor may want to talk alone with your child to find out more about what your child is thinking and feeling.

Your PCC may also ask you to fill out a form that asks you to check off symptoms that your child may have such as "having trouble sleeping." You may also be asked if the symptom is "severe" or "mild" and how often it happens. Through this form and by talking with you and your child, your PCC will determine if these symptoms are related to a mental health problem. He or she will also consider other health problems that may be the cause of your child's symptoms.

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**If you need more services, your PCC will help coordinate all these services with you. You and your child will always play an important role in the treatment plan.**

### The Massachusetts Child Psychiatry Access Project (MCPAP)

In Massachusetts, your PCC can get extra help or information about treating children's mental health problems through the Massachusetts Child Psychiatry Access Project (MCPAP). Your PCC may call during your appointment to speak to a MCPAP child psychiatrist or another child mental health specialist.

The MCPAP specialist can give advice to your PCC about how to help your child or suggest a referral to other mental health services.

After you talk about your concerns, your PCC should be able to answer the following questions:

- What type of problem is it? (What does he or she think is the suspected diagnosis?)
- How serious is the problem?
- What are you, your doctor, and your child going to do about the problem?
- Should your child or adolescent see a specialist?

### What kind of treatment can you expect?

The treatment depends on what the problem is and what usually works the best. Sometimes your child or adolescent may get a referral for counseling. Or he or she may be referred to special education services or for psychological testing. Some children may need to take medications. Depending on the problem, either your PCC or a psychiatrist can give you a prescription.

