



## **Frequently Asked Questions: Transitioning School Based Mental Health Care from Elementary to High School**

Updated 2.28.20

### **Are school based mental health services available in high schools?**

Yes, school based mental health services are offered at many high schools across Greater Cincinnati. You can find contact information for school based therapists by talking to your child's current therapist, visiting the MindPeace website at [www.MindPeaceCincinnati.com](http://www.MindPeaceCincinnati.com), or calling the main office at the school and asking to speak with their mental health partner.

### **How long will the transition process take? When should we start?**

You should begin talking to your therapist about a transition plan as soon as you and your child make a high school selection. Generally, the transitioning process will start in early spring and requires one meeting with the current therapist to create a transition plan for your child. At this time, you will have the option to give consent for the therapist to communicate with the high school therapist about your child. It is recommended that you schedule a meeting with the therapist at the high school prior to the start of the following school year to give you and your child a chance to meet the new therapist and find out where their office is located.

### **What if I have not decided which high school my child will attend?**

You can begin working on a transition plan with your therapist before you and your child choose a high school, but will have to wait to fill out the consent forms until you make the high school selection.

### **What if we select a high school over the summer?**

Many school based therapists work through the summer, so first try to contact the current therapist at the elementary school. If they cannot be reached, please call the mental health agency and ask to speak with someone in school based services. If you do not know the name of the agency, this information can be found on the "School Based Mental Health Contact List" on the MindPeace website at [www.MindPeaceCincinnati.com](http://www.MindPeaceCincinnati.com). You can also find the name of the agency and therapist at the high school along with their contact information on this list if you wish to contact them directly.

## **Can my child continue to receive mental health services from their current therapist after they transition to high school?**

If you wish to continue services with the same agency or therapist, please discuss this with your child's therapist first. Some agencies serve both elementary and high schools or give you the option to continue with the same agency with office based services in your community.

Transitioning care to the school based therapist at the high school means your child can go to them for help during any school day as opposed to therapists from outside agencies who are only available for a scheduled appointment.

## **What is my therapist's role in the transitioning process?**

Your therapist can work with you to create a transition plan for your child to help facilitate a smooth transition to high school. Your therapist can give you the contact information for the new therapist at the high school and with your written consent can communicate with them about your child's treatment plan to help him/her stay on track with their mental health goals.

## **What are my responsibilities as a caregiver in the transitioning process?**

You can continue to support your child as they work through their mental health challenges by collaborating with the therapist to help your child reach his/her goals. You have the option to give consent to allow the current therapist to share information about your child's treatment plan with the therapist at the high school. Giving consent for the therapists to share information is beneficial because it will allow for uninterrupted care.

## **How do I give permission for my child's current therapist to release information to the therapist at the high school?**

In order to share confidential treatment information, you will need to sign consent forms that will give the therapist permission to share information with a designated therapist at the high school. Only "need to know" information will be shared and it will only be exchanged between the two mental health agencies and therapists to whom you give written permission.

## **If I sign the consent to release information, who will have access the records?**

The same HIPAA guidelines that protect health information at the doctor's office apply to mental health information. The consent forms will give specifics, but generally you will be providing consent only to share information with the agency and provider designated.

## **By signing the release of information form am I allowing colleges or future employers to access this information?**

Mental health information will not be included in your child's academic record. The only high school staff who would have access to this information would be those people designated by you.

## **Frequently Asked Questions: Medicaid Benefits**

**I currently have Medicaid and pay nothing for school based mental health services. Will I have to pay once I move to a new therapist / provider?**

Most agencies that provide school based services accept Medicaid, so your child would continue to receive services at no cost to you. Medicaid limits benefits for some mental health services, so please check with your current therapist or agency to determine what your benefit limit is and how many units your child has already used.

**What if I lose my Medicaid benefits – will I lose services or have to pay?**

This will be decided on a case by case basis. If your Medicaid lapses but you are still eligible for benefits, you should reapply ASAP. If you are no longer eligible for Medicaid or become covered by private insurance you should discuss this with your therapist. If your current agency will not accept your new insurance, your therapist will give you a referral to an agency or therapist on your insurance panel. You can also visit the MindPeace website at [www.MindPeaceCincinnati.com](http://www.MindPeaceCincinnati.com) and search the online database of mental health providers in your area that accept your insurance.

**My therapist told me I've used up all of my Medicaid benefits this year. Does that mean I have to wait until next year for my child to start seeing a therapist again?**

Individual therapy uses a guide that allows providers to bill Medicaid beyond 52 hours / year if medically necessary. However, providers will want to work together to transfer information necessary for documentation of medical necessity and clinical decision making.

## **Frequently Asked Questions: Private Insurance Benefits**

**How can I find out if the therapist at the high school will accept my insurance plan?**

You will need to call the therapist at the high school to get this information. To find their number you can ask your current therapist or go online to [www.MindPeaceCincinnati.com](http://www.MindPeaceCincinnati.com) and access the lead mental health partner at your child's school to find this information. If they do not accept your insurance, you can visit the MindPeace website and search the online database of mental health providers in your community to find a list of therapists that meet your needs.

**I have a high deductible on my health insurance plan and am concerned about the cost of co-pays. What is the average co-pay for mental health therapy?**

All co-pay amounts are set by the individual insurance company. You can call the number listed on the back of your insurance card or ask the high school therapist to help you find this information. They will likely give you the number of the person who handles insurance billing at their agency. If the cost of the co-pay is higher than you can afford, ask if sliding scale fees are offered based upon family income.