

Transitioning Mental Health Therapy to High School



Entering high school is a stressful transition for all students but especially difficult for those struggling with mental health challenges. School based mental health therapists can help prepare students for the transition and help them overcome any challenges in the process.

What is a Transition Plan?

- A transition plan outlines goals and services. The plan is based on a student's individual needs, strengths, skills, and interests to assist the student in meeting specific goals the following school year.

Why is a Transition Plan Helpful?

- Students receive enhanced support for success in a new school environment.
- Students are linked to familiar and supportive resources who can offer encouragement and help with problem solving.
- Students are offered opportunities to further enhance skills for managing mental health needs.

How do I know if Mental Health Therapy is Needed?

- Symptoms such as extreme changes in behavior or appearance/hygiene, withdrawal from activities, loss of interest in activities, hopelessness, increased outbursts or crying, excessive sadness, worry, anxiety, and guilt are signs that your child may need to talk with a therapist.


How Can Students Access School Based Mental Healthcare in High School?

Students in need of therapy

- Start the conversation by speaking to the school counselor about concerns or therapy needs. They will help connect you and your child to the right resources.

Students currently receiving therapy at school

- Request a meeting with the current therapist prior to the end of the school year to ask for support in the transition. Generally, the transitioning process will start in the spring and requires one meeting with the current therapist to create a transition plan. At this time, you will have the option to give consent for the therapist to communicate with the high school therapist about 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.

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- It is recommended that you schedule a meeting with the new therapist at the high school prior to the start of the following school year. This gives you and your child a chance to meet the new therapist and find out where their office is located.

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.

What Information is Shared?

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Can Students Continue to Receive Treatment from their Current Therapist after They Transition to High School?

- It's recommended that you receive services from the provider at the high school if it is medically appropriate. Data shows us that when students have school-based mental health therapy at the school they attend they are 25-50% more likely to receive care. Transitioning care to the school-based therapist at the high school also means your child can go to them for help during any school day as opposed to continuing with a therapist who would not be able to be seen at school. Having a therapist located on school grounds also helps in the event a mental health emergency happens.

- 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 telehealth services or office-based services in your community.
- If the school-based therapist at the high school is on a wait list put your child's name on the list while you review and consider other providers who may have availability sooner in the community. Search for providers at www.MindPeaceCincinnati.com/search or call (513) 803-0844 for help.

Insurance Questions:

Medicaid Benefits

I currently have Medicaid and pay nothing out of pocket 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 with no out of pocket 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 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.

*Further questions about Medicaid can be found at:
<https://mindpeacecincinnati.com/faqs/mental-health-treatment/>

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 the Home Page on 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. Sliding scales are based upon family income.

What if I want to file a complaint?

- If you have a question or concern about your mental health/ substance abuse benefits and are unable to resolve a complaint with your insurer you can file a complaint with the Ohio Department of Insurance's Consumer Services Division (CSD). When filing a complaint, the CSD will determine if your health plan handled your issue appropriately and within the terms of the policy or certificate of coverage.
 - Online complaint form: <https://gateway.insurance.ohio.gov/UI/ODI.CS.Public.UI/Complaint.mvc/DisplayConsumerComplaintForm>
 - Emailing Consumer.Complaint@Insurance.Ohio.gov
 - Contacting ODI's consumer services at 800-686-1526

*Further questions about insurance can be found at <https://mindpeacecincinnati.com/faqs/private-health-insurance/>.

FACT: 1 in 6 youth experience a mental health disorder each year (NAMI, 2020).

What if We Prefer to Receive Treatment Outside of School?

- If school based therapy is not the right fit for your child, there are other options available in our community. Please visit www.mindpeacecincinnati.com to find a therapist through our searchable database or call the MindPeace office at (513) 804-0844.

What if We Want to Stop Treatment?

- If you wish to terminate treatment, please discuss this in advance with your therapist so they can assist you in determining methods to prepare for future challenges and offer resources.