



## **Children's Community-Based Mental Health Services Referral Handbook**

The Kern County Mental Health System of Care has provided nearly sixty years of service to residents of Kern County. It is a public agency, committed to serving with compassion and sensitivity, meeting the diverse needs of Kern's people, communities and rural areas.

Our employees and contract providers are dedicated professionals, well trained and prepared to provide excellent service. They are advocates and mentors, empowering individuals to take action, yet committed to the wise and effective use of public funds.

For more information, please contact:  
Kern County Mental Health  
Children's System of Care  
P.O. Box 1000, Bakersfield, CA 93302  
(661) 868-6721  
or the Geographic Provider in your area



**Kern County Mental Health  
Children’s Community-Based Mental Health Services**

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## Kern County Mental Health

### Children's System of Care

#### The Philosophy of the Program

**Mission:** The Mental Health System of Care is to provide the most effective, highest quality combination of treatment and support to persons with emotional disturbance, addiction and mental and emotional disorders.

**Vision:** The Mental Health System of Care serves and empowers people affected by mental and emotional disorders or addictions to achieve the highest quality of life.

#### **Value:**

**Power:** Power is a resource most effective in achieving lasting outcomes when used in cooperation with others.

**Relationships:** People thrive with a variety of mutually supportive relationships, both with other individuals and groups.

**Physical & Emotional Health:** We are committed to promoting the best physical and emotional health for all.

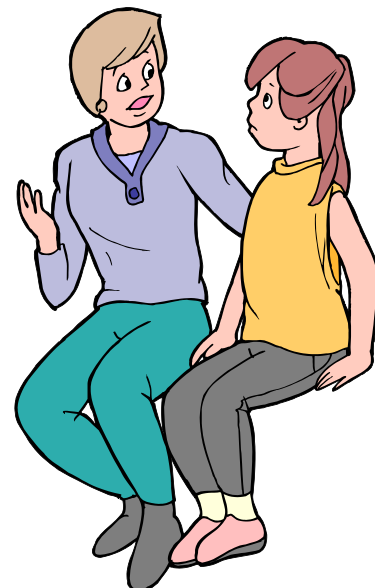
**Choices:** We support maximum self-determination for children and families.

**Sharing:** Individuals have the right to strive to live, learn, and work in the settings of their choice.

**Feeling Safe:** Everyone has the right to physical and emotional safety.

**Belonging:** Committed to creating a sense of community.

**Learning and problem solving are fundamental to growth.**

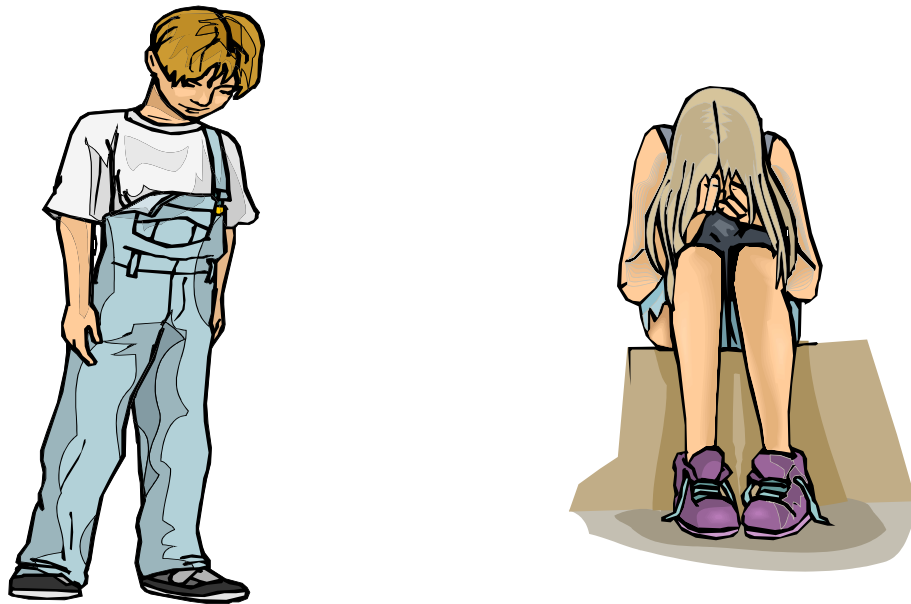


**Eligibility:** Kern County Children’s System of Care’s primary focus is to serve children who are unable to obtain mental health services due to limited financial resources. Mental health services are provided by the Department of Kern County Mental Health and its contract providers to children and adolescents who have or are eligible for MediCal or Healthy Families depending on their medical necessity. Children in a Special Education Program may be eligible for services through the AB 2726 Program.

**Who Qualifies for Services:** Children, ages 0-21, who are determined to be “at-risk” and who exhibit a combination of consistent and chronic disruptive behaviors that cause severe disturbances in functioning. Transition-age youth (18-21), shall be served either in the Adult or Children’s System of Care, whichever best meets the needs of the individual.

If you have any questions about who qualifies for services, you can talk to the child’s school counselor or administrator or call the geographic provider in the area where the child lives. You can also call Kern County Mental Health Access at 868-8111.

If a child is not eligible for county services, the provider will attempt to link the family with an appropriate community resource.



**Confidentiality:** All mental health services are confidential. However, communication between the involved parties is critical to providing quality care. Exchange of information among appropriate staff is possible with consent of the parent or legal guardian. A sample Consent and Authorization to Release and Exchange Information is included in this handbook.

**Cost of Services:** Families and children who have or are eligible for MediCal or Healthy Families may receive services. Services may be free of charge, or there may be a co-pay or share of cost. Assistance in applying for MediCal or Healthy Families will be provided. Children who do not qualify for MediCal or Healthy Families will be screened for medical necessity, and financial options will be discussed with the family. Other financial arrangements may be made at the provider’s discretion.

### Available Services:

- Individual Counseling
- Family and Group Counseling
- Social Skills Groups
- Therapeutic Behavioral Services (TBS)
- Psychiatric Evaluations
- Case Management (including home visits)
- Substance Abuse Counseling and Education
- Dual Diagnosis
- Crisis Response and Intervention
- Medication Support
- Information and Referral Services



Services may be provided at a mental health clinic, school-site, in the home, or in the community. Kern County Mental Health services are community-based; therefore, providers may elect to offer a majority of services at selected school sites.

**How to Get Services:** Parents/guardians may request services from the child's school, directly from the provider or they may call Kern County Mental Health Access at 868-8111.

**Referral Process:** For school-based services, both the provider and school decide on the process that best meets mutual needs. Some school sites have a designated mailbox where the provider staff will retrieve referrals. Some providers request that the school staff fax referrals directly to the provider's main office. School staff or referring party must notify parent of referral and receive written or verbal consent prior to making the referral.

Once a referral has been submitted, the parent/guardian will be contacted and an initial screening scheduled, at which time the identified concerns and issues will be evaluated. Provider will attempt to make contact with the family through phone calls, letters or home visits as deemed necessary. If the provider has difficulty contacting the family, the provider may ask the referring party to assist with initiating the linkage.

If appropriate, a clinical assessment will be scheduled and a treatment plan recommended. The child's case will be opened and assigned a case coordinator. If the child does not qualify for mental health services, a referral for an alternative resource may be made. The provider will notify referring party of the status of the referral as appropriate.

The following situations may interfere or delay the referral process:

- Lack of response from parents or guardians
- Disconnection of phone service
- Change of address or residence
- Cultural bias of mental health services

**Feedback Process:** It is important that the school, family and various agencies work together to provide as much assistance as possible to children and their families. Mental Health providers are bound by federal and state confidentiality laws and require a release of information from parent/guardian to communicate with the school and other community agencies as it relates to treatment. For services provided at school sites, the school administrator will have the contract provider's contact and phone number to call with any concerns or questions.

**Inservice/Presentations to School Staff:** Mental health providers are available to provide instruction to school staff during pre-arranged meetings. School staff will be oriented on the referral process, types of services provided, and will be given reference information. It is the goal of the Children's System of Care to work to improve communication between schools, providers, community resources and families.



### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

#### **ABOUT THE REFERRAL PROCESS:**

**What kind of child do I refer?** Children whose emotional or mental impairment is causing severe disturbance in functioning.

**How do I refer a child?** Call the area provider directly (listed on page 8); call KCMH Access at 868-8111; or use the referral protocol established at the child's school site. Obtain consent from the child's parent/guardian and fill out the required referral form.

**Who can consent for treatment of a minor?** Parents and court-ordered legal guardians. Probation officers if the child is a ward of the court and the parents cannot be located. Social workers must get an order from the court if the child is a dependent of the court, and the parents cannot be located.

**What is confidentiality?** All mental health services are confidential and private. Federal and state laws regulate what and how records and information obtained during the course of both voluntary and involuntary mental health services may be shared. A written release of information from the parent or guardian is required for any specific sharing of the child's treatment.

**How long does the referral process take?** Once the referral is received, the case is screened, assessed and if appropriate, assigned in the most efficient manner possible. Crisis cases are prioritized.

## **ABOUT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

**Why doesn't every child referred get accepted for services?** Sometimes problems the child exhibits do not meet service qualification. Parents/guardians may decline services. Some parents/guardians are opposed to mental health services because of experience or culture. Sometimes there may be more appropriate resources that meet the needs of the child and family. In this case, the child will be referred to the appropriate resource.

**Do you take insurance?** Families with private insurance will be referred to their insurance provider. The primary focus is to serve children eligible for MediCal or Healthy Families. Assistance in applying for MediCal or Healthy Families will be provided. Children who do not qualify for MediCal or Healthy Families will be screened for medical necessity and financial arrangements or an appropriate referral will be discussed with the family.

**What is Healthy Families?** Healthy Families is an insurance program for children whose families meet certain income guidelines. A child may qualify for care under this program if the family income is too high to qualify for MediCal.

## **ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES:**

**What is a crisis?** A crisis is a major disruptive event that can result in dangerous behavior of the child to him/herself or others.

**Who do I contact if a child is suicidal or is in crisis?** Depending on the immediateness of the crisis, call 911 or contact the Crisis Stabilization Unit at 868-8000. If the child is already receiving mental health services, also contact the child's case coordinator.

**Why doesn't every child receive therapy?** Case coordinators evaluate cases on an individual basis to determine the needs of the individual and make referrals for therapy, or social skills groups, or case management, or other mental health services as needed.

**Why are students pulled out of class?** If a child is receiving services at a school, he/she may be pulled out of class to attend a social skills group or a session with the case coordinator or therapist. The therapy schedule will be reviewed with the parent and teacher ahead of time if possible.

**Why don't all children get social skills group, especially when their insurance doesn't cover them?** Mental Health must first address priority mental health needs of children who have or are eligible for MediCal or Healthy Families and children who have no financial means to obtain services.

**If a student is receiving mental health services, should the school notify the child's case coordinator of school meetings such as IEPs or SATs, SITs, or SSTs called on behalf of the child?** Absolutely, yes. Please involve the child's case coordinator in any meeting you feel mental health issues may be addressed.

**Do mental health workers do home visits? When? How often?** Home visitation is part of mental health case management services. The time and frequency of home visits are determined on a case-to-case basis and depend on the needs identified by the family and case coordinator.

## **ABOUT TREATMENT:**

**What is a Plan of Care?** A Plan of Care identifies treatment goals, objectives, and discharge criteria. The Plan of Care process supports empowerment by helping a person look at possible changes in all areas of his/her life, encouraging choices that best suit his/her current situation and needs, and providing an expanded array of services, referral options, and community-based help. The Plan of Care is based on the strengths, abilities, needs and preferences of the individual served.

**What is a PACT?** A PACT (Provider Authorization Coordination Team) is a meeting where the child's progress is discussed and the treatment plan adjusted.

### **ABOUT SPECIALTY SERVICES:**

**What are Specialty Services?** Mental Health collaborates with other agencies to offer services to children who enter the system through hospitalization, the court system, and the foster care system. There are also special programs such as Special Therapeutic Day (Aurora) and Sexual Abuse Treatment.

**What is TBS?** Therapeutic Behavioral Services (T.B.S.) are an EPSDT supplemental service for children/youth on full-scope MediCal under 21 years of age, with serious emotional problems who are experiencing a stressful transition or life crisis and need additional short-term support to prevent placement in a group home of Rate Classification Level (RCL) 12-14, or a locked facility for the treatment of mental health needs, including acute care; or to enable a transition from any of those levels to a lower level of residential care.

**What is MIST?** The Multi-Agency Integrated Services Team (MIST) is part of the Children's System of Care grant and consists of representatives from the Department of Public Health, Department of Human Services, Probation Department and Mental Health. MIST is available to consult and work with multi-disciplinary teams to provide slightly more intensive services to children and families with multi-agency involvement, who are at risk of out-of-home placement, in the greater Bakersfield area. Consultation to areas out of Bakersfield is available.

### **ABOUT STUDENTS IN A SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM:**

**What is the AB 2726 (3632) Program?** The AB Program works in collaboration with Special Education and assists students in special education programs and who need mental health treatment in order to benefit from their education. California State Law mandates that the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Education must collaborate to provide services when deemed necessary to enable an emotionally disturbed child to benefit from his/her educational placement. Local interagency agreements are maintained between community mental health agencies and Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA).

**How do I make a referral to AB 2726?** Children are generally referred to the AB Program through the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team at their respective Local Education Agency (LEA). The referral packet must include the parental consent to refer to the AB Program, a current copy of the most recent IEP, copies of current assessments, a behavioral checklist, and parental consent to release school records. The school psychologist, the SELPA administrator, or the identified LEA representative is generally the referring party. Contact the Special Education coordinator of the child's school for more information.

### **ABOUT CUSTOMER SERVICE:**

**What do I do if I have questions, concerns or complaints?** Please feel free to contact the case coordinator or supervisor. If no resolution occurs, contact the geographic provider's clinical director or administrator. For further resolution, contact Kern County Mental Health's Children's Administrator at 868-6721.

### Geographic Area Providers

Area	Location	Agency	Phone
1	Delano/McFarland/Pond	Child Guidance	(661) 725-1042
2	Shafter/Buttontwillow/Lost Hills/Wasco/Semitropic	College Community Services	(661) 758-4029
3	Taft/McKittrick/Tupman/Maricopa/Fellows	Kern County Mental Health	(661) 765-4853
4	West Bakersfield	Child Guidance	(661) 327-0933
5	North Bakersfield/Glenville/Woody	Child Guidance	(661) 327-0933
6	Kern Mountain/Lake Isabella/Kernville/Weldon	College Community Services	(760) 379-3412
7	Ridgecrest (North Desert)	College Community Services	(760) 499-7406
8	(South Desert) Tehachapi Rosamond California City Boron, Mojave	College Community Services	(661) 822-8223 (661) 256-7208 (760) 373-2979
9	Arvin/Lamont/ Frazier Park	Clinica Sierra Vista	(661) 845-5100 (661) 245-0250
10	Central/Southeast Bakersfield	Child Guidance	(661) 322-1021
11	East Bakersfield	Kern County Mental Health	(661) 868-6750

**Other Important Telephone Numbers:**

**To access 24-hour crisis services**

Kern County Mental Health Crisis Stabilization Unit.....(661) 868-8000  
or 1-800-991-5272

**To access mental health consumer and family support**

KCMH Consumer/Family Learning Center.....(661) 868-7177  
(National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), Parents for Children, Family to Family)



**To report suspected child abuse**

Kern County Department of Human Services .....(661) 631-6011

**To access county information & referral service**

HelpLine .....(661) 336-5200 or 1-800-273-2275

**To access teen pregnancy/parenting services**

Clinica Sierra Vista Adolescent Family Life/Cal Learn.....(661) 327-0293

**To access domestic violence intervention services**

Alliance Against Family Violence & Sexual Assault.....(661) 327-1091 or 1-800-273-7713

**To inquire about Kern County’s local collaboratives**

Kern County Network for Children .....(661) 631-5566

**Add Your Important Telephone Numbers Here:**
