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## **CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH BEST PRACTICES LITERATURE REVIEW**

Children's mental health issues are commonly addressed in family-focused treatment, integrated community-based treatment, and school-based treatment. Children's mental health services are distinct from adult mental health services in that: 1) Children experience rapid developmental changes within a much shorter amount of time than adults; 2) Family context must be taken into account in the treatment of children; and 3) A majority of children's mental health services are provided by schools. Thus, in order to develop effective community intervention models, programs must be focused on practitioner behavior, organizational variables, and the characteristics of the community.

### **Principles for the Delivery of Children's Mental Health Services**

#### **1. Collaboration with the child and family**

Parents and children are treated as partners in the assessment process, and the planning, delivery and evaluation of behavioral health services, and their preferences are taken seriously.

#### **2. Functional outcomes**

Behavioral health services are designed and implemented to aid children to achieve success in school, live with their families, avoid delinquency and become stable and productive adults.

#### **3. Collaboration with others**

When children have multi-agency, multi-system involvement, a joint assessment is developed and a jointly established behavioral health services plan is collaboratively implemented.

#### **4. Accessible services**

Children have access to a comprehensive array of behavioral health services, sufficient to ensure that they receive the treatment they need.

#### **5. Best practices**

Behavioral health services are continuously evaluated and modified if ineffective in achieving desired outcomes.

#### **6. Most appropriate setting**

Children are provided behavioral health services in their home and community to the extent possible. Behavioral health services are provided in the most integrated setting appropriate to the child's needs. When provided in a residential setting, the setting is the most integrated and most home-like setting that is appropriate to the child's needs.

#### **7. Timeliness**

Children identified as needing behavioral health services are assessed and served promptly.

#### **8. Services tailored to the child and family**

Parents and children are encouraged and assisted to articulate their own strengths and needs, the goals they are seeking and what services they think are required to meet these goals.

#### **9. Stability**

Behavioral health service plans strive to minimize multiple placements. Behavioral health service plans anticipate and appropriately plan for transitions in children's lives, including transitions to new schools and new placements, and transitions to adult services.

#### **10. Respect for the child and family's unique cultural heritage**

Behavioral health services are provided in a manner that respects the cultural tradition and heritage of the child and family.

#### **11. Independence**

Behavioral health services include support and training for parents in meeting their child's behavioral health needs and support and training for children in self- management.

#### **12. Connection to natural supports**

The behavioral health system identifies and appropriately utilizes natural supports available from the child and parents' own network of associates, including friends and neighbors, and from community organizations, including service and religious organizations.

### **Best practices for providing culturally competent services to young children with mental health challenges and their families**

- Understanding Culture from Multiple Perspectives

This includes practices related to worker self-awareness, developing knowledge of other cultures and understanding how to individualize services to each family.

- Collaborating with Community Members

This includes involving members of the family's cultural community and involving members of the general community in services.

- Partnering with Families in a Culturally Respectful Way

This relates to using appropriate assessment tools, understanding each family's individual situation and encouraging families to take the lead in determining service needs.

- Interaction with Children

This focuses on reviewing provider and agency practices for acceptability to diverse cultures, increasing sensitivity to linguistic and cultural difference in the classroom and the use of appropriate assessment tools with children.

- Program Strategies that Promote Cultural Competency

This includes best practices such as conducting an agency cultural competency assessment, adopting a strength-based approach to services, employing diverse staff and insuring access to services by culturally diverse children and families.

### **Specific Interventions with Some Evidence Base**

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) One of the most effective treatments for youth with depression.
- Multi-Dimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) Decreases anti-social behavior and builds pro-social skills.
- Multi-Systemic Treatment (MST) Promotes responsible behavior to reduce irresponsible behavior.
- Parent Management Training (PMT) Helps parent build skills to support and maintain their children at home and in the community.

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## **RESOURCES**

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Association for Children's Mental Health  
[www.acmh-mi.org](http://www.acmh-mi.org)

"Children's Mental Health" Washington State University Spokane Child and Family Research Unit  
<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/hrsa/mh/kidsbestpract.pdf>

Research & Training Center for Children's Mental Health  
<http://rtckids.fmhi.usf.edu/>

National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice and Permanency Planning. [http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info\\_services/evidence-based-practice.html](http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/evidence-based-practice.html)

Emerging recommendations of best practice work groups are reviewed along with evidence across a range of child welfare target areas, including prevention, treatment and foster care settings. The article concludes with a review of challenges and possible solutions for implementing EBPs in child welfare and child maltreatment related service systems.

<http://www.cachildwelfareclearinghouse.org/files/EBP%20in%20child%20abuse%20and%20neglect--Chaffin%20and%20Friedrich.pdf>

Published as a component of the Child Abuse Prevention Initiative administered by the Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, this study identifies best practices in the field of child abuse prevention.

<http://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/programs/whatworks/report/index.cfm>

[http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/service/improving\\_practices/](http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/service/improving_practices/)

SAMHSA's list of effective programs

<http://www.modelprograms.samhsa.gov/model.htm>

Effective child welfare programs

<http://www.cachildwelfareclearinghouse.org/>

The incredible years program

<http://www.incredibleyears.com/>