An Overview of Vermont’s Public System of Care for Children’s Mental Health
Many children and adolescents have mental health challenges that affect their daily functioning. This overview is intended to help you - the parents/caregivers - to navigate the public system of care for children’s mental health in Vermont.
Philosophy

Vermont’s public mental health system operates on the belief that it is important to access the lowest possible or “least restrictive” level of care before moving up to higher levels. The desired outcome is to keep children within their home, school and community with services that meet their needs and promote their safety and success.
What is Vermont’s system of care for children’s mental health?

Ten designated agencies (DAs) and one specialized services agency covering various districts in the state.

– Nonprofit, private agencies (“Community Mental Health Centers”)
– Under contract with the state to deliver many public mental health services
– Most private insurance accepted
What services do these agencies provide?

- outpatient services
- in-home family work
- one-to-one community skills workers
- care coordination
- respite
- school-based supports
- early childhood mental health supports
- crisis response
- specialized out of home care such as foster care, crisis placements, and residential care
Why do I need to know about the public system of care for children’s mental health?

If your child experiences emotional or behavioral problems and needs support in the community or in a residential facility, you may need to utilize the public system of care.
What if I have private insurance?

Community mental health agencies provide many of the needed supports that private insurance does not cover.

- Some, but not all, services require the child to be Medicaid eligible.

- Your child may be eligible for Katie Beckett or Dr Dynasaur insurance through Medicaid.
How can I access the system of care?

Contact your local Designated Agency

Request a psychological or special education evaluation through your child’s school

Get a referral from a pediatrician

Ask for a Coordinated Services Plan meeting
Act 264

Act 264 is a law in Vermont enacted in 1988 which **entitles** a family to coordination of services between agencies if their child has significant mental health and other needs.

A Coordinated Services Plan meeting is the forum for this process.
What is a Coordinated Services Plan meeting?

A Coordinated Services Plan (CSP) meeting brings together a team to address problems that may lead to a crisis for a child and family.

- CSP meetings focus on the hopes and strengths of a young person and his/her family.
- A Coordinated Services Plan is developed with family input.
- CSPs do not affect a child’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Any changes to the IEP must be made at an IEP meeting.
Who should attend the meeting?

- Representatives from mental health, education and the Department for Children and Families (DCF) and anyone else who has knowledge of your child
- Your child, if possible
- A Parent Representative is available, at parent request, to help families with the process.
What might go into a CSP?

Examples include...
Help in the home
Therapy
Evaluations
Participation in activities
Community support
Social skills work
Transportation assistance
Crisis plan
Where can I find out more about the CSP process?

• The Parent Representative can help you understand the process, prepare for the meeting and go along with you for support.
• Contact Vermont Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health for the Parent Representative in your area. 800-639-6071 or [www.vffcmh.org](http://www.vffcmh.org) (information on website.)
• Vermont Family Network offers information and support for CSP meetings in Chittenden County. 800-800-4005 or [www.vermontfamilynetwork.org](http://www.vermontfamilynetwork.org)
• Contact your local Designated Agency.
• Get more information at the Dept. of Mental Health website [http://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/](http://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/)
If things still aren’t working...

You may request that your care coordinator make a referral to your Local Interagency Team (LIT) for more problem solving or a higher level of care and supports.
What if my child needs residential care?

Access to out of home care can be initiated through the CSP process and occurs only after local resources have been utilized.

• Placement is reviewed by the Case Review Committee for funding approval. The Committee includes a Parent Rep.

• Placement options are recommended by the Dept. of Mental Health.
System of Care Flow Chart

Child with severe emotional disturbance

Coordinated Services Plan

Local Services and Supports

Local Interagency Team

Crisis Care: In-home, Diversion, Hospitalization

Case Review Committee

Residential Placement

Child with severe emotional disturbance
Act 264 flow chart

Child with SED has needs

Treatment team formed

Develop and implement Coordinated Services Plan

Needs met. Exit

Problems with implementation – Local Interagency Team (LIT)

Needs met. Exit

Problems not resolved – State Interagency Team (SIT)

Needs met. Exit
I found a great wilderness school for my child. Will the state pay for it?

- Parents who place their child in a residential facility without utilizing the public mental health or Individualized Education Program (IEP) process are usually financially responsible for all costs.

- A young adult who has been privately placed in an out-of-state facility may find it takes longer to access the public services he/she needs after returning to the community. It is far better to access the public services in the community as early as possible before considering out-of-home care.
Will my child be eligible for adult services when s/he graduates?

Adult public mental health services are very different from children’s services. Eligibility for adult mental health services will depend on the severity of your child’s impairment.

If your child has an IEP, be sure the transition plan (required at age 16) addresses adult supports.

Contact your Designated Agency well before your child turns 18 to find out what services are available to young adults.
The Vermont system of care for children’s mental health is available to all children in all families and communities.
For more information...

Vermont Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health  800-639-6071 or www.vffcmh.org
Vermont Family Network  800-800-4005 or www.vermontfamilynetwork.org
Department of Mental Health
802-828-3824/888-212-4677 or http://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/cafu
Your local Designated Agency