

## How do I find out if my child has a serious emotional disturbance?

### Where Do I Start?

In Allegheny County there are many “starting points” from which you can choose in order to have your child’s symptoms evaluated. Where you start is often a matter of personal preference, insurance coverage, existing relationships you may have with a family doctor or other professionals, or the severity of your child’s symptoms. Occasionally, someone else (such as the school, police, or your family doctor) may recommend that you have your child evaluated, and may provide you with a referral.

Here are some suggested starting points:

**Your family doctor or pediatrician** - You may be surprised to know that there are a number of physical conditions that can mimic or lead to serious emotional disturbances. If your child has a family doctor or pediatrician, this is a good place to start. Schedule an appointment with your doctor and be prepared to talk openly and honestly about your child’s symptoms. Your doctor will examine your child and may order some tests. This doctor is making sure that there aren’t any known physical reasons why your child is experiencing mental health symptoms.

**Neurologist** - If no apparent physical causes are found by your family doctor, your child may be referred to a neurologist. A neurologist is a specialist who can check brain structure or brain functioning by using a variety of tests.

**Psychiatrist** - You may be referred to a psychiatrist, or you may choose to select a psychiatrist without a referral. A psychiatrist is a medical doctor who will use a variety of psychological tests and techniques in order to evaluate your child’s mental health symptoms. A psychiatrist can prescribe medicine, if necessary.

**Psychologist** - You may be referred to a psychologist, or you may choose to select a psychologist without a referral. A clinical psychologist is licensed to diagnose and treat serious emotional disturbances. He/she may use a variety of psychological tests and techniques to evaluate your child, much like a psychiatrist. However, a psychologist cannot prescribe medication.

Note: If you don’t have a family doctor or don't know how to select a psychiatrist or psychologist, there are a number of resources that can help you. They are:

- Ask your health insurance provider to furnish you with a list of physician names, specialties and office locations.
- Call Community Care Behavioral Health at 1-800-553-7499 if your child currently receives Medical Assistance (CHIP) through the Department of Public Welfare and currently lives in Allegheny County.
- Call the Physician Referral Service at your local hospital.
- Call the Allegheny County Medical Society for a list of physician choices. Their phone number is 412-321-5030.

**School Guidance Counselor** - Your child's guidance counselor can be very helpful in referring you to local resources and professionals, especially if your child's symptoms have caused your child to have problems at school. You can talk to the guidance counselor by phone or in person. Call your child's

school district, and they will help you contact the appropriate guidance counselor.

**Faith-Based Leader** - The clergy or religious leaders at your church, synagogue, mosque or other place of worship can provide a wealth of information about services that are available to you and your child. Some families are more comfortable talking with someone they know.

**Service Coordination Units** - You may choose to go to a Service Coordination Unit, which generally is a part of a community mental health center. There are a number of public and private mental health centers in Allegheny County. Each one operates a little differently, but, in general, these centers are full-service mental health programs. Psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and many other professionals staff these facilities. They evaluate needs, plan a comprehensive treatment program with you and your child, and make the necessary services available on a continuing basis. They are also responsible for making sure that your child gets the services he or she may need and for coordinating the services that are being provided.

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services contracts with a number of Service Coordination Units (community mental health centers). These are located throughout Allegheny County, and you have the choice of where you go to have your child evaluated. These Service Coordination Units and their phone numbers are listed on page 9.

A list of providers that contract with the Allegheny County Department of Human Services and serve the needs of children and adolescents with mental health issues can be found in a separate publication called the *Where to Call* directory. You can get a copy of this publication by calling Information, Referral and Emergency Services at 412-350-4456/TTY, 412-350-3467.

In addition, the names and phone numbers of many private mental health centers can be found in the business section of your phone book under the heading of "Mental Health." You can also find a number of listings in the Blue Pages of your phone book in the "Guide to Human Services" under "Mental Health Programs."

**Crisis Services** - If your child's symptoms are severe, and you feel that your child may be a threat to himself or herself or to others, you may not have time to schedule an appointment with one of the professionals listed above. If this is the case, call:

- Re:solve Crisis Network 1-888-7-YOU CAN (1-888-796-8226). This service operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and provides telephone crisis counseling, emergency care, and referrals for all residents of Allegheny County in crisis situations. This program is staffed by trained clinicians able to handle crisis telephone calls and requests for services. They will also respond onsite to crisis situations, if needed.
- Information, Referral and Emergency Services (IRES) 1-412-350-4457 (emergency and after hours number) 1-412-350-4456 (non-emergency daytime number) 1-412-350-3467 (TTY). This service operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and puts you in touch with Allegheny County staff that can provide information, find someone to provide ongoing help, or help you arrange involuntary examination and treatment when needed.

## List of Allegheny County Service Coordination Units

### **Chartiers MH/MR Center, Inc.**

437 Railroad Street  
Bridgeville, PA 15017  
412-221-3302

### **Family Links**

2644 Banksville Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15216  
412-343-7166

### **Family Services of Western Pennsylvania**

3230 William Pitt Way  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
1-888-222-4200

### **Human Services Administration Organization**

2801 Custer Avenue  
Pittsburgh PA 15227  
412-884-4500

### **Mercy Behavioral Health**

1200 Reedsdale Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15212  
1-877-637-2924

### **Milestone Centers, Inc.**

600 Ross Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15221  
412-243-3400

### **Mon Yough Community Services**

500 Walnut Street  
McKeesport, PA 15132  
412-675-8300

### **Pressley Ridge**

530 Marshall Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15214  
1-888-777-0820

### **Staunton Clinic**

720 Blackburn Road  
Sewickley, PA 15143  
412-741-6600

### **Turtle Creek Valley MH/MR**

723 Braddock Avenue  
Braddock, Pa. 15104  
412-351-0222

### **UPMC Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic**

3811 O'Hara Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
412-624-1000

**\*MH/MR** = Mental Health/Mental Retardation