

**PHILADELPHIA**



**Behavioral Health Resources  
For Young Children - (Birth to Age 5)  
2005**

**WHERE TO GO FOR HELP**

A Guide for Early Care and Education Professionals



A PUBLICATION OF:

**Philadelphia Citizens for Children & Youth**

## INTRODUCTION

Young children communicate through their behaviors. Children who often throw temper tantrums, don't get along with other children, or shy away from adults are sometimes viewed as "difficult to handle" or "problem children" by teachers or parents. These behaviors are part of normal development and are often children's way of telling us something. Usually, the behaviors don't last a long time and can be addressed by parents and child care providers. Sometimes, however these behaviors don't go away or become more intense over time. When this happens, it is often upsetting to parents, child care providers, and the children.

**When child care workers, parents and mental health providers WORK TOGETHER, it is more likely that children will grow up HEALTHY AND STRONG.**

We hope this guide will help those who work with young children to:

- Understand what they can do to help children grow up healthy and strong
- Understand when a child may need behavioral health services and
- Know where to look for help

If you have a young child with a behavior health concern and you need help getting insurance or finding treatment, call **PCCY 215-563-5848 x17**.

## EXPELLING A CHILD DOESN'T WORK!

Yet, according to our survey, nearly 50% of Philadelphia child care programs have expelled a child because his or her behavior was too difficult to handle. When this happens, parents may be left with no child care, and no idea how to get help for their child.

When you are caring for a child who has a behavior problem, it's easy to blame someone or something. But blaming doesn't help. Instead work with the parent and develop a plan to address the problem.

- 1. Look at the environment** – is it a good place to learn and play?
- 2. Talk with the parent**– is there a stressful situation at home?
- 3. Look at the classroom schedule** – is the child getting enough time to play?
- 4. Look at the child** – has she changed her behavior recently?

If the child's behaviors continue, maybe he needs more help.

You may want to refer him for a behavioral health assessment (see blue page insert) for where to turn for help.

**Nearly 50% of Philadelphia child care programs have expelled a child because his or her behavior was too difficult to handle.**

## HOW DO YOUNG CHILDREN DEVELOP?

Every child is different and develops at his or her own pace. As children grow, they learn new skills such as walking or talking. These skills, called “developmental milestones,” are usually learned in a predictable way. For instance, children usually crawl before they walk and point before they use words.

Many people use developmental milestones to help decide whether a child is developing at a healthy pace.

Children grow and change quickly during their first 5 years. Growth occurs in several areas:

- **Social-Emotional** – how children take in and understand what is happening in the world around them, show emotions, and develop relationships
- **Cognitive** – how children think and learn
- **Language** – how children use signs, sounds, and words to communicate
- **Sensory** – how children hear, see, taste, smell and touch things in their world
- **Motor Skills** – how children move and coordinate their bodies

Don't be surprised if one child's development is a little different than another child's development. Some children develop more quickly (or more slowly) in one area than another – and it's still normal.

## WHAT IS TYPICAL BEHAVIOR FOR A YOUNG CHILD?

Young children often have different behavior patterns. Some babies cry loudly when they are hungry, others may not cry even when it is past their feeding time. Some toddlers are scared when they meet a new person, while others run up and say hello. Some children can sit for a long time, while others start to fidget or run around after a few minutes. All of these behaviors are normal.

**If a child's behavior is extreme, continues for a long time and concerns you or the parent, this child might need assistance.**

## HOW CAN I TELL IF A CHILD HAS A PROBLEM?

It is often difficult for parents and child care workers to determine if a child needs help. If you are worried or frustrated, you don't have to be alone. Help for both children and parents is available.

Some children can be considered “challenging” by parents and child care workers. Here are some examples:

- Children who are very energetic and always on the go
- Children who don't like to change activities
- Children who get very upset when things don't go their way
- Children who are withdrawn or very shy in new situations
- Children who are very difficult to calm down or soothe

These behaviours can be normal. However, if you are concerned that a child is not doing things that most children of the same age are doing or if a child's behavior seems extreme, you should discuss this with the child's parent.

Some warning signs that a child may need help:

- Does he have frequent temper tantrums?
- Is she unusually quiet or withdrawn?
- Does he often play very aggressively (biting, hitting or kicking)?
- Does she aggressively destroy objects such as furniture, walls or toys?
- Have you observed a dramatic change in his personality?
- Does she show no delight or pleasure?
- Does he engage in inappropriate sexual behavior?
- Does she frequently soil herself, even after being toilet trained?
- Is she cruel to animals?
- Does he make serious threats to others?
- Does she have frequent nightmares?
- Does he bully younger children?
- Does she have delayed speech?

**Behavior  
can be a child's way  
of telling us his or  
her needs! Ask  
yourself, “what is  
the child trying to  
tell me?”**

- Does the child's behavior often make you angry?
- Do you usually have to threaten to get the child to listen?
- Does the child have a poor appetite or overeat?

If you think that a child might have a problem use the checklist below. You should talk to the child's parent. Parents should be encouraged to talk to their child's health care provider and ask if their child needs a developmental screening or an appointment with a behavior health professional (see blue page insert for a list of behavior health agencies).

## WHAT CAN I DO IF A CHILD SEEMS TO HAVE A PROBLEM?

Talk to the parents (see pages 5 & 6 for tips on talking to parents). Parents and child care workers need to work together to address children's behavior problems.

Here are some things you can do in your child care program.

### **1. Identify what might be causing the behavior: look for people, places and things.**

- Are there certain people that upset the child?
- Are there parts of the room that upset the child?
- Are there certain things (such as time of day) that upset the child?

### **2. Record the child's behaviors.**

### **3. Set aside time to make sure the child's individual needs are being met.** For example, talk to him, hug her, help resolve problems, feed him, change her diaper.

### **4. Ask yourself if there are changes you can make to your child care setting that might help the child.**

A QUALITY CHILD CARE PROGRAM OFFERS CHILDREN THE FOLLOWING:

- A balance between active and quiet time
- Consistent praise for positive behavior (for sharing, turn-taking, and cooperative play)

- Enough toys and materials for all of the children to play with
- A quiet place to go to when children want to be left alone (make sure you can still see them!)
- A place to go to when children want to play
- Appropriate “circle time” or “sitting time”  
(Make sure you are not asking children to sit still for too long!)
- One-on-one time with the teachers
- Enough adults in the room

Here are a few organizations that you can contact for help creating a better child care environment for children:

**ECELS – 800-243-2357**

**Keystone Stars Technical Assistance – 877-660-2273**

**DVAEYC – 215-963-0094**

**Devereux – 1-800-935-6789**

**Institute for Family Professionals – 215-654-9414**

If the child’s problems continue, talk to the parents again! Encourage parents to talk to their child’s health care provider. This child might need more help!

## **HOW TO TALK TO PARENTS ABOUT THEIR CHILD’S BEHAVIOR**

Talking to a parent about his/her child’s behavior can be difficult. Many parents feel guilty and upset once they realize their child is experiencing difficulties or is in need of help. Other parents may become defensive and try to place blame for their child’s problems on something or someone. Remember, parents love their children and want the best for them. Work with parents as a team to help the child.

**Remember, parents love their children and want the best for them. Work with parents as a team to help the child.**

It is important for child care providers to understand how parents are feeling and to work with them as much as possible. The ultimate goal should be to help the child!

**Here are a few tips on how to communicate with parents:**

- **Be clear and give examples of how the child is behaving.**  
First, start with something positive. For example, say, “Susie plays well in the morning,” then be concrete: “Susie had four temper tantrums today.” Do not say, “Susie is too difficult for me to handle.”
- **Focus on the most difficult problems.** Don’t give a list of troubling incidents. Parents can get overwhelmed when hearing about their children’s behavior.
- **Be positive about the child’s future.** Do not say, “Your child is going to get kicked out of my center if he doesn’t stop biting.” Instead, say, “We are concerned about your son’s biting and want to talk about it.”
- **Put yourself in the parent’s shoes.** It is never easy to hear that your child is not behaving normally. Try to be sensitive to how parents may feel.

## **DO YOUNG CHILDREN EVER NEED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TREATMENT?**

Yes, sometimes young children need behavioral health treatment. It is important that emotional or behavioral health problems are recognized and treated early. The challenge for child care providers is to help parents better understand the needs of their children and to assist them in finding help when needed. If children don’t receive treatment when they need it, they often feel frustrated or hopeless and sometimes fall behind. When children get the right help, it is more likely they will build good relationships, be better prepared for school and grow up healthy and strong.

Each of us has a role to play in supporting the social and emotional development of children. When children exhibit behavior problems, parents, child care providers and mental health providers need to work together to come up with the right response for the child.



## WHAT WOULD TREATMENT LOOK LIKE FOR A CHILD?

After some preventive steps (reinforcing positive behavior, talking with the parents or balancing the child care schedule), the child may still need to be referred for a behavioral health assessment and, possibly, treatment. Family treatment usually means working with parents and children together. Therapy is one treatment option. Through therapy, the mental health provider will assist parents in preventing or addressing their children's emotional or behavioral difficulties.

For children **ages 3 and over** who need significant help, wraparound services may be recommended.

**Treatment usually means parents and children working together with a mental health provider.**

Wraparound Services (also known as Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services or BHRS) are special home or school-based intensive support services that focus on children's individual needs. These services must be prescribed by a psychiatrist or licensed psychologist based on an assessment of the child.

Wraparound services may include:

**Behavior Specialist** – A Behavior Specialist is a behavior health professional who works with the child and the family to develop a plan for reshaping the child's behavior. The behavior specialist observes the child's behavior in the child's own setting. They identify the child's strengths and develop a treatment plan with the parent that addresses the child's behavioral needs.

**Mobile Therapist** – A Mobile Therapist is a person who provides therapy to children in their own home. They help children and families cope with issues such as loss, developmental delays or disabilities, anger management, parenting, and behavior modification.

**Therapeutic Staff Support (TSS)** – A TSS may work with a child in the home or child care program. They work to help make positive changes in children's behavior. The TSS also provides encouragement to the child as well as feedback about how the child's behavior affects others.

Wraparound services are available for children covered by Medical Assistance (MA). For a list of agencies that provide Wraparound Services, call **Community Behavioral Health (CBH) at 1-888-545-2600**.

If wraparound services are recommended for a child with private health insurance, contact **PCCY at 215-563-5848 x17** to ask about applying for Medical Assistance. Privately insured children may be eligible for Medicaid and Wraparound.

## DO CHILDREN NEED MEDICATION?

**NOTE:** AS A CHILD CARE PROVIDER OR WORKER, YOU CANNOT DETERMINE WHETHER A CHILD NEEDS TREATMENT OR MEDICATION. HOWEVER, YOU CAN ENCOURAGE AND HELP PARENTS TO SEEK APPROPRIATE HELP WHEN NEEDED.

In most cases, children do not need medications. Behavior re-shaping and therapy should be tried first to help children change their challenging behaviors (such as temper tantrums or sleeping difficulties).

For some children, whose behavioral health issues are severe, medications may be helpful. If this is the case, children should be referred to their health care provider or to a behavior health specialist (such as a psychiatrist or developmental pediatrician) for an opinion about medication. Parents have the right to agree or not agree to give their children medications.

If medicine is prescribed, parents should understand the risks and benefits of a medicine. Tell parents to talk with their child's doctor before agreeing to give a drug to their child. Parents also need to make sure they are clear about when and how to give their child medication. Encourage parents to ask questions!

## HOW DO I GET TREATMENT FOR A CHILD?

Finding the right behavioral health provider can be confusing. The best way to start is by asking questions. It's important that parents and their child are comfortable with a provider.

Encourage parents to:

- Talk with the child's health care provider. Most health care providers know particular children's behavior health providers.
- Talk to friends, co-workers or family members for referrals. Word of mouth is often a good way to get the inside "scoop."
- Call the child's health insurance plan to find providers who participate in the plan and work with young children (if a child is insured through Medical Assistance, Call Community Behavioral Health (CBH) at 888-545-2600).

Parents can also call a behavioral health agency near them (refer to the blue page insert for a listing of agencies). Tell parents to find someone they trust to work with their child.

Once they find a behavioral health agency, parents can call the office and ask the following questions:

- Are they accepting new patients?
- Do they accept the child's health insurance?
- Do they have experience treating children like your child?
- When is the next available appointment?

**If parents  
don't like  
their child's  
behavioral health  
provider, they can  
always change!**

## HOW LONG DO CHILDREN HAVE TO WAIT TO SEE A BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROVIDER?

The behavioral health agencies listed above must see children on Medicaid within:

- 24 hours if it is an emergency
- 72 hours if it is urgent
- Within 7 calendar days/5 business days for a routine appointment

If a child needs to see someone more quickly, parents can call around to different centers in their area to see which can give them an appointment first. If parents need more assistance, they can call Community Behavioral Health (CBH) at 1-888-545-2600 or call PCCY at 215-563-5848 x13.

### Parents can also get help from the following agencies:

**For Children 0-3 years old:**

**ChildLink**

**215-731-2110 [www.phmc.org/early](http://www.phmc.org/early)**

ChildLink offers service coordination to children from birth to age 3 with developmental delays or disabilities and assistance to families in accessing appropriate supports. The services they offer are free. ChildLink staff members work with families to evaluate their child needs, identify priorities and outcomes and develop a plan of services and supports.

**For children 3- 5 years old:**

**Elwyn's SEEDS Program**

**215-222-8054 [www.elwyn.org](http://www.elwyn.org)**

Elwyn's SEEDS (Special Education for Early Developmental Success) offers a broad range of services to children age three to five who meet the Pennsylvania Department of Education eligibility requirements. Eligibility is based on the results of a multi-disciplinary evaluation and the need for special education.

When a referral is made, the family is assigned to a service coordinator. If the child is found to be eligible for services, he or she will be able to get help from one of 15 different agencies that contract with Elwyn. Services can be provided in a child care program or at an early intervention location. The family may also be referred to Community Behavioral Health for other behavioral health services

## **A CHILD'S INSURANCE DOESN'T COVER BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES: WHAT CAN I DO?**

**Even if a child has  
insurance,  
they sometimes have a  
hard time getting the  
behavioral health services  
they need.  
Don't worry.**

Even if a child has insurance, they sometimes have a hard time getting the behavioral health services they need. Don't worry. There are solutions to this problem.

If a child has private insurance or CHIP and a serious behavior health problem, there is a good chance they will be eligible for Medicaid. To find out more, call **PCCY at 215-563-5848 x17.**

## PARENT RESOURCES:

Here is a list of some of the organizations in our community that can help:

### **Mental Health Association of Southeastern PA:**

215-751-1800 or 800-688-4226

[www.mhasp.org](http://www.mhasp.org)

Advocacy, services and education association with the goal of improving the lives of people with behavior illness in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

### **Parent Education Network (PEN):**

800-522-5827

PEN is a statewide coalition of parents. They offer consultation and parent guidance regarding early intervention and special education.

### **Parents Involved Network (PIN):**

215- 751-1800

[www.pinofpa.org](http://www.pinofpa.org)

PIN is a project of the Mental Health Association of Southeastern PA that assists parents and caregivers of children with emotional and behavior disorders.

### **Parent to Parent of Pennsylvania:**

800-986-4550

[www.parenttoparent.org](http://www.parenttoparent.org)

A network that connects families with similar needs together so they can share experiences. Offers practical information and support.

### **Philadelphia Society for Services to Children:**

215-875-3400

[www.pssckids.org](http://www.pssckids.org)

Services center for families of young children at risk of abuse or neglect. The focus is on the entire family not the child alone.

## INTERNET SITES FOR MORE INFORMATION:

### **Center for Autistic Children**

[www.Autismhelp.org](http://www.Autismhelp.org).

Information for families with an autistic child.

### **National Alliance for the Mentally Ill**

[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

An advocacy group dedicated to improving the lives of families affected by behavior illness.

### **Community Behavioral Health**

[www.phila-bhs.org](http://www.phila-bhs.org)

Information about getting behavior health services for Philadelphia Medicaid members. This website also has a detailed list of providers and agencies that are part of the CBH network.

### **Division for Early Childhood—The Council for Exceptional Children**

[www.dec-speds.org](http://www.dec-speds.org)

Advocates for families with special needs children 0–8 years of age.

### **Philadelphia Citizens for Children & Youth**

[www.pccy.org](http://www.pccy.org)

An advocacy group dedicated to improving the lives of Philadelphia children. PCCY's Child Healthwatch Helpline is a phone line to call for help in applying for Medical Assistance or CHIP, for help finding care whether or not your child has insurance.

### **Talaris**

[www.talaris.org](http://www.talaris.org)

Provides general information for parents about child development from birth to age 5. This website features a research-based developmental timeline organized by the child's age.

### **Zero to Three**

[www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)

Information for parents and professionals on early childhood behavior from birth to age three.

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# **WHERE TO GO FOR HELP**

A Listing of Behavioral Health Agencies



[www.pccy.org](http://www.pccy.org)

# WHERE TO GO

Agencies	Phone	Location	Ages Served	Services Provided
Albert Einstein Medical Center Outpatient Psychiatry	215-456-7295	North Phila.	Age 22 mo. & up	Assessment Treatment Medication
Assessment Medication & Treatment Alternatives	215-564-9063	North Phila.	Ages 3 & up	Assessment Treatment
Bethanna	215-849-8815	Center City	Ages 4 & up	Assessment Therapy
CCTC Children's Crisis Treatment Center	215-496-0707	North Phila.	Ages 2 & up	Assessment Therapy Medication
Center for Autistic Children	215-878-3400	West Phila.	Ages 2 & up	Assessment
Child Guidance Resource Center	610-565-6000 x117	Media (Delaware Cty)	Age 2 & up	Assessment Therapy Medication
Child Psychiatric Center	215-427-1500	Center City	Ages 3 & up	Assessment Therapy Medication
Children's Services Inc.	215-546-3503	Center City	Ages 2 & up	Assessment Therapy Medication
Community Council for MH/MR Services	215-473-7033	West Phila.	Ages 2 & up	Assessment Therapy Medication
Elwyn Inc.	215-895-5588	West Phila.	Ages 0 & up	Assessment Therapy Medication
GPHA - Greater Philadelphia Health Action	215-831-9882	NE Phila.	Age 3 & up	Assessment Therapy Medication
Hahnemann Hospital	215-831-7800	NE Phila	Ages 4 & up	Assessment Therapy Medication
Hall Mercer Community MH/MR Center of PA Hopsital	215-829-5554	South Phila.	Ages 2 & up	Assessment Therapy Medication
Health Annex	215-685-2684	South Phila.	Ages 2 & up	Assessment Therapy Medication
Jewish Family & Children Services	215-673-0100 x118	NE Phila.	Ages 4 & up	Assessment Therapy Medication

# O F O R H E L P

Agencies	Phone	Location	Ages Served	Services Provided
J.J. Peters Institute	215-701-1560	Center City	Ages 2 & up	Assessment Therapy Medication
Northwestern Human Services of Philadelphia	215-248-6700	Several offices throughout Philadelphia	Ages 4 & up	Assessment Therapy Medication
NuevaVida	215-291-1250	North Phila.	Ages 3 & up	Assessment Therapy Medication
Philadelphia Consultation Center	215-732-8244	Center City	Ages 3 & up	Assessment Therapy

## I HAVE AN UNINSURED CHILD IN MY PROGRAM. WHAT CAN I DO?

If a child is not insured, don't worry. First, call **PCCY at 215-563-5848 X 17** for help applying for insurance for children.

If a young child does not have insurance, they can still get behavior health treatment at the following places:

Agencies	Phone	Location	Ages Served	Services Provided
Community Council	215-473-7033	West Phila.	Ages 2 & up	Assessment Therapy Medication
Northwestern Human Services of Philadelphia	215-248-6700	Several offices throughout Philadelphia	Ages 4 & up	Assessment Therapy Medication
Hall Mercer Community MH/MR Center of PA Hospital	215-829-5554	South Phila.	Ages 2 & up	Assessment Therapy Medication

## FOR ADDITIONAL HELP, PARENTS CAN CALL:

**ChildLink**  
**FOR CHILDREN 0-3 YEARS OLD**  
**215-731-2110**  
**or**  
**Elwyn's SEEDS Program**  
**FOR CHILDREN 3-5 YEARS OLD**  
**215-222-8057**

**For more information on these two programs see page 10.**



**If you have a young child  
with a behavior health  
concern and you need help  
getting insurance or finding treatment,  
call PCCY 215-563-5848 x17.**



[www.pccy.org](http://www.pccy.org)