



*Sedgwick County...
working for you*

COMCARE
Children's Program

FACTS & details

about Sedgwick County Government

May 2012

Children's Mental Health

How prevalent is mental illness among children?

According to the 2001 Surgeon General's Report, one in five children and adolescents suffer from a diagnosable mental illness severe enough to cause some level of impairment. One in 10 is believed to have a serious emotional disturbance (SED) and nearly two-thirds of all of these children receive little or no treatment.

How do I know if my child has an SED?

If your child exhibits many of the following behaviors and signs, he or she may have an SED.

In the home:

- Frequent violations of household rules
- Dramatic change in personality or behaviors
- Isolative behaviors
- Aggressive behaviors
- Verbally assaultive
- Parents feel that youth is "out of control"
- Parents threatening to place kid out of home
- Suicidal thoughts, plans or gestures
- Self-harming behaviors

At school:

- School performance clearly below youth's ability
- Difficulties making or maintaining relationships
- Youth's behavior interferes with ability to learn
- Frequent detentions (more than two per month for several months)
- School avoidance
- Repeated in-school or out-of-school suspensions
- Failing classes not solely due to cognitive limitations
- Truancy
- Assaultive or aggressive behaviors
- Excessive sick days without medical basis

In the community:

- Lack of participation in community or peer-related activities
- Contact with law enforcement due to youth's behavior
- Running away or threats to run away
- Legal action against youth
- Probation or a history of probation

How does mental illness affect children?

Untreated mental health problems can disrupt children's functioning at home, school and in the community. Without treatment, children with mental health issues are at an increased risk of school failure, contact with the criminal justice system, dependence on social services, and even suicide. Studies suggest that for every dollar spent on mental health treatment for children and youth, the community receives between \$4 and \$7 in savings.

Is help available for children with mental illness?

Individual and family therapy has been shown to help many children, but is not always the answer for children suffering from a mental illness, especially for children experiencing a serious emotional disturbance. For children with SED, a "system-of-care" is the preferred model of treatment.

What is a system of care?

The core values of a system of care include: child centered, family focused and family driven. This requires a commitment to adapt community-based services to the child and family in the least restrictive manner and in the most normal location (i.e. in the community, at school and in the home), so the child and family can be supported in achieving their goals.



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What are the results of a system of care?

Proven outcomes for effective community based services show behavioral and emotional problems are reduced. Clinical functioning is improved, school attendance is improved, school performance is improved, law enforcement contacts are reduced, and co-occurring substance abuse problems are improved.

Is assistance available for my child and family?

Because we care about the futures of our youth, Kansas offers a federal Medicaid waiver program for children 4 to 18 years of age who experience serious emotional/behavioral disturbance.

Only state Community Mental Health Centers, such as COMCARE of Sedgwick County, assess children for eligibility into this program and provide the community-based services. Eligibility for the program is based on the child's financial resources and certain assessments to determine clinical need for services. While private insurance does not pay for community-based services, they may be covered by the SED Waiver if the child meets financial and clinical eligibility criteria. Services are also available through our sliding scale fee.

While this fact sheet lists possible examples of functional impairment, they are in no way complete. As in any determination about an individual, further information and sound clinical judgment will be necessary to make a final decision and diagnosis.

With questions or for more information, contact COMCARE's Children's Program and community-based services at 316-660-9605 or visit www.sedgwickcounty.org.

COMCARE of Sedgwick County is a licensed Community Mental Health Center.