



Dear Parent,

Did you know that it is estimated that over 15 million children and teens have a mental health problem? Unfortunately, only one in five of the children with a mental health problem get treated. That may be because parents are usually less familiar with, or feel confused about, obtaining mental health care. When a child is sick with the flu or has an ear ache parents usually head straight for the doctor. Physical symptoms are more obvious and sadly, may get more professional attention than mental health symptoms.

Parents may not readily recognize their child's symptoms as a mental health problem. They may feel embarrassed, think they should handle the problem on their own, disagree when someone suggests their child could benefit from an evaluation or treatment, or misunderstand a child's problem. Unfortunately, misconceptions and shame may delay or prevent adults from seeking the help their child needs.

Congratulations for taking the first step in getting your child the help they may need. When parents are concerned about a possible mental health issue both they and the child will benefit from seeking guidance and treatment from a professional.

The following guide was created by parents who have previously "navigated" the mental health system in hopes of helping other parents and caregivers seek appropriate care for their children without feeling overwhelmed, alone, or intimidated. This guide is intended to assist parents/caregivers in getting started with the Pennsylvania's Children's Mental Health Services System.

Sincerely,

*Value Behavioral Health of PA Family Advisory Committee's
"Navigating the System" Subcommittee*