



Federation of Families of South Carolina

Federation of Families of SC

Fall 2010

www.fedfamsc.org

Health Care Reform Impacts Children

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On June 22nd, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Department of Labor, and the Department of the Treasury released regulations to implement a new patient's bill of rights. This policy came from sections under the health care reform law that aim to help children with pre-existing conditions get coverage, and to end lifetime limits on care that people receive. Regulations have been published that prohibit insurance companies from denying children under 19 from coverage because they have a pre-existing condition. This rule applies to both group health plans and individual health plans, but does not cover *grandfathered* individual health plans.

This rule officially goes into effect on September 23, 2010. However, many insurance companies have already implemented this policy.

For more information check the following sites: The National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, www.ffcmh.org/2010/08/ (http://www.healthreform.gov/newsroom/new_patients_bill_of_rights.html), released by the federal government's new health care reform website, healthreform.gov. If you do not have internet access contact the Federation of Families of SC for copies of this information.

Defusing Violent Behavior in Young Children: An Ounce of Prevention

Early Intervention in preschool and early elementary grades can prevent more destructive violence later.

Parents and teachers can learn skills to intervene and prevent explosive behaviors by teaching young children social skills and better ways to cope.

Examples of Violent (Explosive) Behavior:

Swearing, Kicking, Pushing, Biting,
Throwing Things, Starting Fights,
Making Threats, Destroying property.

Social Skills need to be taught by parents and teachers
Behavior expectations and values:

Empathy Self awareness and restraint
Caring Respect

Identify the **underlying reason** for anger
Getting what you want?
Frustration, attention, revenge,
Social/emotional disturbance

Unable to master task
Difficulty with transitions and unexpected changes.

Know the **triggers** from previous behavior

Stay in front of the meltdown

Intervene early, break the pattern: only choice is not "losing it"

Notice precursor behaviors

Getting upset, clenching fists, facial expressions, sighs of exasperation,
Provide a safe place to decompress and signal a need for help,
Avoid circumstances that trigger outbreaks,
Give extra time to do work or transition,
Offer to help

Outlined from National Association of School Psychologists
www.nasp.org

REVERSING THE TREND

Children & youth with mental health challenges do not belong in the Juvenile Justice System

Communities can save money

Communities can do better

Support strategies to reverse this trend

It is estimated that at least 75% of children and youth in juvenile detention have mental or emotional disorders that should be treated.

Many factors account for this situation: among them, recent trends toward more punitive laws and decreased state level funding for mental health services. In addition, most communities have insufficient capacity to identify and respond to problems early, thereby preventing some disorders from developing and others from becoming complicated by additional issues, such as substance use.

And, yet, 75% of juvenile facilities do not meet basic suicide prevention guidelines, according to the Council for Juvenile Justice. These trends need to be reversed.

Communities can save money.

One successful children's mental health system, which employed a wraparound process, estimated spending an average of \$4,200 per child while juvenile detention costs \$6,000 per child. ***That could mean a \$2,200 savings per child, per month for your community.***

Incarcerating a young person can cost \$40,000 a year, while substance abuse treatment without incarceration, can cost as little as \$3,000 a year. ***That could mean a \$37,000 savings per youth per year for your community.***

Communities can do better.

Recent evidence demonstrates how to promote good mental health and prevent some children's mental disorders from occurring or from becoming worse. Some communities are fixing this problem through collaborations between their juvenile justice and mental health systems.

Chapters for the **National Federation of Families** are creating strategic alliances with police departments in their communities to help prevent unnecessary arrest and incarceration.

Support strategies in your community to reverse this trend.

Create healthier communities for healthier children.



We Need Your E-Mail Address!

In an effort to save money - and go green as well - we are hoping to limit the printing of our newsletter to a minimum number of copies.

We'd like to send future issues of our newsletter to you electronically. Please help us by providing and/or updating your current e-mail address. Send contact info to:

donna.shaw@fedfamsc.org

Or call the Federation office in Columbia at 772-5210 or toll-free 866-779-0402.

If you'd like to continue to receive the newsletter in printed form, E-mail or call as above or send mailing address to : Federation of Families of SC, 810 Dutch Square Blvd., Suite 205, Columbia, SC 29210.

FACTS FOR FAMILIES**ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD****GENERAL TIPS**

Remember -- you are the primary decision-maker for your child. No changes in your child's placement or services should take place without your approval, except in an emergency situation.

You are a member of the team. Work with the people who work with your child. Your success as an advocate for your child depends on working with others.

Be confident about your abilities and your rights; you know your son or daughter better than anyone else.

Talk with other parents to discuss strategies, common problems, and work for solutions. You are not alone.

Read about your child's special needs. Talk with professionals and other parents to learn as much as you can. Try to have a complete understanding of your child's needs.

Remember your child's strengths. Try to keep things on a positive level.

Use the knowledge and skills you already have. Read about related issues, such as advocacy, communications and organizational skills, negotiations, and conflict resolution.

Keep up-to-date on state and federal laws governing education and special education. Participate in a workshop to learn your rights and your child's rights. Become familiar with the basic terminology and acronyms used in education.

KEEP RECORDS

Be willing to create a paper trail. Develop a file system to organize all your child's records, your notes, and communications including letters. Keep copies of papers given to you at school meetings.

Write down your child's accomplishments. Keep notes about your concerns, questions, and answers.

Keep notes on phone calls and visits, and keep copies of all letters and records. Keep a meeting log, noting the dates and names of people involved. It is a good idea to confirm in writing what was discussed in the phone call.

Follow up phone conversations and subsequent meetings with letters that repeat what you have agreed to.

Whenever you write a letter, make sure you explain your position, your understanding of their position, what you expect to happen and who will do it, and your timeline for a response.

Date and keep copies of your child's work. Keep copies of homework, tests, drawings, and writing samples.

BEFORE THE TEAM MEETING

Be sure to have a pre-assessment meeting. Know what assessments will be done and who will do them. Ask for other assessments if you think they are necessary.

Think about your child: What can she do? What does she contribute to your family, your community, her school? What are your dreams for her when she is in her 20s? What do you want the school to provide?

Write down your ideas and give them to the team. It is your assessment of your child.

Ask your child what he would like to learn next year, what kind of help he thinks he needs. He may be interested in something or have some good ideas.

Ask for copies of all your child's records, and review them before the team meeting. Ask for summaries of assessments before the team meeting. Read them carefully, and make notes of the things you wish to discuss, and of any questions you may have. It is your right under the law to ask for explanations in terms you understand.

AT THE IEP TEAM MEETING

You have a right to invite anyone to attend the IEP team meeting with you. Bring a friend, family member, or another parent for moral support. This person can take notes and discuss the meeting with you.

Invite professionals who know your child, such as an evaluator, psychologist, or therapist. If they can't come, ask them to contact the team chairperson and send a report.

You are also a professional. Dress appropriately, and look as professional as possible. Stand straight, shake hands firmly, and maintain eye contact as you are introduced to the other participants. If no one begins the introductions, do it yourself. Speak clearly, and maintain eye contact while you are talking.

Sit with the other team members. This shows that you are part of the decision making. If you can, sit between people with power. Try to avoid having your side and their side of the table. It sets up sides rather than focusing on the joint effort.

Arrive promptly. By being on time or a few minutes early, you will demonstrate that you consider this meeting to be important, and that you are ready to conduct business.

Make a note of those present so you can compare the names with the attendance sheet on the individual education plan (IEP).

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Be as specific as possible in discussing your child's needs and abilities. Be positive. Be clear. Make positive statements, such as "I expect. I understand. My child needs." There is less chance that other people will misunderstand what you say. You will be more confident, and effective. **Stick with the issue at hand** -- your child's education. Don't be sidetracked by irrelevant issues, such as your past experiences or the school's lack of funds. You are discussing an individualized education to meet your child's unique needs.

Remain as friendly as possible. Separate the people from the problems. Don't deal in personalities.

Remember that understanding the other person's viewpoint is not agreeing with them, but shows that you are paying attention, are interested in what they have to say, and are willing to work with the team.

Feel free to ask questions. Ask for clarification of anything you don't understand.

Be flexible enough to accept minor revisions, but be firm about the major issues.

It may not be possible to finish all the business at hand in one session, even when things are going smoothly.

It's best to reconvene the team the next day or a few days later to stay fresh, rather than rush to finish.

Feel confident enough to conclude the meeting if the situation looks hopeless. Don't waste your time. Tell the other team members that you will attend another meeting when they are ready to negotiate in good faith.

IN YOUR CHILD'S PROGRAM

Maintain close contact with your child's teacher. Some families have regular meetings, some have a daily notebook, and some have regular telephone calls. Share information and suggestions. Be supportive. Listen to the teacher's feelings and ideas, and involve him where appropriate.

If you think teachers or other team members are doing a good job, tell them. Thank teachers and other members of the team, including the principal and special education director, when they have done something you appreciate.

You've known your child for a long time. If you've discovered hints that help your child learn, share them. Offer to help teachers and others adapt materials or programs.

Remember that other people such as the school bus drivers, janitors, lunchroom workers, and secretaries may know and help your child in informal ways.

Get involved in your child's school. Join the PTA, go to school plays, volunteer in the library. The more people see you, the better you will get to know each other. This sometimes makes it easier to work together for your child.

Go over your child's IEP every few months. Are the services stipulated in the IEP being provided? Are you satisfied? Is your child happy?

Talk with your child's teacher or liaison if you have any questions, or if there are any problems.

If the IEP is not working, ask for a meeting of all the people involved. If you feel it is necessary, ask for a team meeting to change the IEP. You may do this at any time.

IF PROBLEMS ARISE

If you feel the school is not following the IEP you signed, speak up. Remember -- you are advocating for your child. If you don't do it, no one will.

First, talk with your child's teacher or liaison to see if you can work out the problem. Sometimes, a problem is a simple misunderstanding, and can be resolved by asking questions or explaining what you expect. Remember, you are a member of the team. If possible, work cooperatively with other team members to resolve problems.

If this does not work, call and/or write a letter to your ARD team chairperson, explain the problem, and ask that specific actions be taken to resolve it. Send a copy to the school principal and special education administrator. Remember to set your timelines for responses and/or action. Don't let time run away. Your child is the one losing out.

Call the team chairperson three days after you mail the letter, and ask what has been or will be done about the problem. Ask that the school establish specific steps toward resolving the problem.

If the team chairperson is not able to solve the problem, contact the special education director. Ask that quick action be taken to resolve the problem. If necessary, contact the superintendent and your school committee.

If you cannot reach an agreement with your school system, request mediation from the Department of Education. This is less formal, and not as adversarial or costly as a hearing.

If all else fails or if the problem is especially serious, request a due process hearing. While an appeals hearing may prove to be costly and time consuming, it does have the advantage of giving you and your child a chance to state your grievances before a qualified and impartial hearing administrative law judge who is required to make a clear-cut decision.

FOUND AT: <http://www.mdcoalition.org/advocating.htm>

Becoming Aware of Subtle Bullying in the Schools

When people think of bullying, they usually see the obvious. Behaviors such as hitting, name calling, teasing, making threats, gossiping etc. come to mind and are easily identified. This type of bullying is usually intentional, direct, and meant to hurt. Research has shown that bullying can damage a student physically, mentally, and emotionally, decreasing his/her self-esteem.

However, there are other forms of bullying that are very subtle but just as damaging. These either go unnoticed or may be ignored by teachers, administrators, parents, and students. Subtle bullying usually happens out of ignorance, with the perpetrators being totally unaware of the damage they may be causing. And, sometimes subtle bullying is not necessarily what happens; it's what doesn't happen.

I am a retired teacher with twenty-four years experience. I currently work as an independent communications consultant for the ADAMHS Board of Adams, Lawrence, Scioto Counties in southern Ohio. The content of this article and the below numbered scenarios (of course, with fictitious names) are an accumulation of my observations and experiences throughout my teaching career.

As you read the following classroom anecdotes, ask yourself if these subtle forms of bullying are damaging to a student's self esteem. Does the concept of subtle bullying deserve some awareness?

- Showing a lack of interest in group members a student is assigned to.
- Sighing, raising eyebrow, snickering, scowling, "death walk" etc. when put with a partner.
- Interrupting.
- A simple look or gesture (turning away, looking away).
- Not inviting others to join.
- Laughing at someone when they talk about who or what they like.
- No "Good job!"
- Choosing friends based on what other friends decide.
- Pointing out a person's imperfections i.e. height, weight, looks, status, etc.
- Implying (hinting or suggesting) that another student is not so smart.
- Disrupting someone's belongings with no regard at all.
- Critiquing others (Did you see...? Look at that.
- Crowding.
- Laughing/snickering when a certain group is mentioned.
- Saying, "I can't believe you didn't know".

The above 15 scenarios are not all inclusive when it comes to the topic of subtle bullying. There is an almost infinite amount of situations that occur that could be shared. Contrary to typical bullying being very direct and easy to identify, subtle bullying is indirect (implied) and difficult to identify. Unlike obvious bullying, subtle bullying, more than likely, goes unnoticed, unaddressed, and unpunished, usually occurring out of ignorance. Subtle bullying occasionally happens to all students at one time or another and is not that damaging. But, there are too many students that are too often at the receiving end of various acts of subtle bullying on a daily basis. This causes a negative, accumulative effect for these students over the years. In this case, subtle bullying can become as bad if not worse than ordinary bullying. For many, this is detrimental to the quality of life and self esteem.

By Rebecca Miller, MSEd

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