



SUCCESSFUL KIDS: Children with Behavioral Health Care Needs

Sure, health insurance is important in preventing and treating childhood illnesses and injuries. But did you know many behavioral health conditions such as childhood depression and anxiety disorders are covered under public health insurance, too? Behavioral health is an important component in the overall wellness of a child and enables the child to grow into a healthy, productive adult.

More than 1 million children in Pennsylvania receive their health insurance through Medicaid. A number of these children receive Medicaid without regard to parental income due to the severity of their condition. Many of these kids access needed behavioral health services, too.

Ten-year-old McKenna of Berks County has been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder and struggles with behavioral issues, as is common in kids with autism. But with the help of Medicaid, McKenna receives a variety of behavioral health therapies that have helped her complete her most successful school year to date. Intensive cognitive and social skills therapy sessions combined with an aide who accompanies McKenna to school have enabled her to achieve important gains.

“For the first time ever McKenna was able to be successful both behaviorally and academically in school. This was the result of many professionals working together...people who understood her needs and her cognitive ability and who were able to work hard to diagnose all of her strengths and weaknesses,” said Trish, McKenna’s mom.

Many children like McKenna receive health insurance coverage through their parents’ employment. However, many children either do not have coverage through a parent’s employment, or the employer-based coverage doesn’t cover specialized behavioral health services. Medicaid helps fill the gap and becomes a lifeline for many families and allows their children to get back on the path to realizing their fullest potential.

“McKenna’s various services are not available through my husband’s health insurance supplied by his employer,” Trish said. “Had it not been for the Medicaid coverage she receives for behavioral health rehabilitation services, McKenna would likely now be a 10-year-old in a residential treatment facility or hospital somewhere.”

Let’s finish what we started and make sure *all* children, including children with behavioral health care needs, have access to health insurance, not fewer kids. We *can* reach the finish line!

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