

Frequently Asked Questions: Services for Young Children to Address Challenging Behaviors & Emotions

As a parent, you want your child to grow up healthy, happy, and thriving. Some children have unique needs and behaviors that require extra attention to support their development. We believe every child should have access to the best possible care for their physical and social-emotional development. Here are some common questions that families ask about receiving behavioral health services for their young child.

Question: What is “Behavioral Health” or “Social-Emotional Health” for Young Children?

Answer: Behavioral or social-emotional health refers to a child's ability to control how they share their feelings, how they behave, and how they play and interact with others. It is a vital part of their overall health and development.

Key aspects of social-emotional health include:

- Building strong, loving relationships with family, friends, and other important people in their life
- Understanding and expressing their feelings and behaving in a healthy way
- Learning and growing in different places such as home, school, and in their community



Question: Why would my child need additional services to address behaviors?

Answer: Every child needs help managing their feelings and behaviors, but some require additional support due to unique ways of processing their emotions and surroundings. It's common for young children to need these extra services—one in five children struggles with emotional or behavioral health issues. Addressing behavioral health concerns with children when they're young is more effective (both treatment and cost-wise) than waiting to address the issue when the child is older or when the problem becomes overwhelming. If your family faces difficult emotions and behaviors regularly, a trained therapist or expert in these behaviors can offer strategies to help support your child and teach them new skills.

Question: What behaviors will these services help address?

Answer: Here are some common behaviors that children may exhibit that providers with experience and expertise can help you address, tailored to your child's brain and temperament:

- Temper tantrums
- Hard time calming down
- Hard time playing with other children
- Not following instructions
- Being aggressive or angry
- Hard time with new places or people
- Seeming very worried or scared
- Seeming very sad, unhappy, or upset
- Sleep problems
- Toileting issues



Question: What can I expect these services to look like?

Answer: Therapy and other services for young children birth through five years of age often look like play time for the child, allowing the therapist to observe their interactions with people and objects. A therapist will spend time with you and your child to learn about your relationship and any challenges you experience. They will help you learn strategies to strengthen the parent-child relationship, build new skills, and manage difficult behaviors. By working together, you'll gain the tools and confidence to support your child's development and apply what you've learned to your child's daily life.



Question: Is behavioral health the same as mental health? Why is my young child being referred to a mental health agency?

Answer: While we often think of mental health as relating to an older child or adult’s psychological and emotional well-being, it can also be used to refer to a younger child’s social-emotional health. Many behavioral health services for young children are part of agencies that also provide services for adolescents and adults, and sometimes offer additional services like substance use disorder treatments. When scheduling an appointment, we will help to connect you to a good match for you and your child, but keep in mind that the organization may provide services to all age groups.

Question: Will my child receive a diagnosis or “label”?

Answer: A diagnosis can often open doors to essential services for your child. Some children may receive a temporary diagnosis, while others may carry one throughout their lives. It's important to remember that a diagnosis does not define who your child is or limit their potential. Additionally, any diagnosis or other information is confidential, just like medical information. Labels can help you talk to health professionals and get the services you need, but you decide who sees that information. For some children, a diagnosis can provide valuable context, helping to explain their unique ways of processing or responding to situations, rather than labeling them as having difficult or problematic behaviors.

Question: What if the therapist doesn’t understand my family's values, background, culture, or language?

Answer: We're committed to working with you to create a plan that meets your family's needs, values, and wishes. If we refer you to a therapist outside of our organization, our team will work with you to find a provider who speaks your preferred language or has access to translation services, and who shares your cultural values and preferences as much as possible. Please give us feedback if you don’t experience that and we can work to try and find other resources.

Question: I have had bad experiences in the past with mental or behavioral health services – can I trust it for my child?

Answer: We understand that past experiences can affect how you feel about the healthcare system, and we want to work together to make sure your child gets the best care possible. We will take time to listen to your concerns, answer your questions, and make sure you’re comfortable before starting any services. Your voice matters and helps us improve the care we give.

Question: What is the difference between a Psychiatrist, Psychologist, Social Worker, Counselor, etc?

Answer: Please see the below website for more information.

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Mental-Health-Care-Whos-Who.aspx>

Question: Will my child be medicated?

Answer: The use of psychotropic medications in young children is quite uncommon. In the unique situation where a medication may be recommended for your child, it will be carefully discussed with you first. The behavioral health specialist and your child’s providers can address the questions and concerns you may have before starting medications and your child should be followed closely.



Please don't hesitate to reach out to us. We're here to support you and your child every step of the way.

Contact the following if you have questions: _____

