

# Steps to Understand Mental Health Needs

## A Guide for Professionals

In 2023 the Mental Health Workgroup was created by the Pennsylvania State Roundtable to examine the impact of mental health on children and families in the dependency system. The Workgroup includes Pennsylvania Dependency Judges, Juvenile Court Hearing Officers, Attorneys, Children and Youth Administrators, Mental Health Professionals, and State Partners.

A significant dilemma identified by the Workgroup for professionals working in the Dependency system is not knowing where to start and what to do in order to help a child or parent struggling with mental health. Asking the right questions enables professionals to identify the most effective services and supports. The Mental Health Workgroup created this tool for Dependency Court and Child Welfare Professionals, to guide conversations with children and families that will lead to the most effective mental health services for those individuals. This guide is intended to serve as a starting point rather than a comprehensive list of all possible questions.



# Steps to Understanding Mental Health Needs

## A Guide for Dependency Court Professionals

### **Step 1: What behavioral changes need to occur in order to ensure safety and well-being?**

Has anyone talked to the child or parent about the behavioral concerns?

When did the child's behaviors start?

What help has the family received?

Have the child or parent offered any reasoning for the current challenges?

### **Step 2: What does the child or parent need?**

Has anyone asked the child or parent what they need?

What do the professionals think the child or parent needs, and why?

Does the child or parent have a supportive person in their life?

Is the child or parent connected to community resources?

Is the child or parent connected to resources in the school?

Is the child involved in any school or community activities?

### **Step 3: Connecting to services**

Are there any barriers to receiving services?

Has a multi-systemic meeting occurred?

### **Step 4: Follow-up**

Is there a case plan for the child that is specific to the mental health needs?

Are there goals that have been established?

Are the child and parent engaged in the identification of goals and the creation of the mental health case plan?

Celebrate Progress and Success!

# Steps to Understanding Mental Health Needs

## A Guide for Child Welfare Professionals

### **Step 1: What behavioral changes need to occur in order to ensure safety and well-being?**

What is the understanding of the child or parent of their behavior?

Has the child's primary care doctor been consulted?

Has anything stressful recently happened in the family or with the child?

Does the child behave the same/differently at school/home?

### **Step 2: What does the child or parent need?**

Was a pre-screening tool completed on the child to determine needs and strengths?

Is the child or parent connected to community resources?

Is the child or parent connected to resources in the school?

Is the child involved in any school or community activities?

### **Step 3: Connecting to services**

Is the county mental health office engaged in the planning & delivery of services?

Has the child been referred to a multi-systemic meeting?

Has the child been referred for a Student Assistance Program (SAP) meeting?

Has the child been referred for Child and Adolescent Social Services (CASSP)?

Are there any barriers to receiving services?

### **Step 4: Follow up**

Is there a case plan for the child that is specific to the mental health needs?

Are there goals that have been established?

Were the child and parent engaged in the identification of goals and the creation of the plan?

Celebrate progress and successes!