



## Therapeutic Interventions for Pre-School Children

### Head Start

*Description:* Head Start is a federally funded program to help disadvantaged children develop cognitive and social skills. Although the program is not intended specifically for children with developmental delays, teachers are trained to identify delays and to help children from deprived environments attain developmentally appropriate cognitive and social skills. Children are taught in small groups, in class room settings. Head start programs are located in neighborhood settings.

*Eligibility requirement:* 165% Percent of poverty level; parents must be working.

*Location:* Often in low-income neighborhoods, churches, or community centers.

### Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy

*Occupational Therapy* provides services that help children who have impairments in fine motor movements.

*Physical Therapy* provides services that help children who have impairments in large motor movements.

Occupational and physical therapists are state licensed and provide individual services to help children improve their fine and large motor control and movement respectively. Therapists use a variety of exercises, treatment, and games. Often the treatment is extended at home with exercises. Therapists often use their treatments to help patients re-gain use of their muscles when recovering from an injury, surgery or stroke. In children these delays are often caused by a neurological condition such as cerebral palsy, however, in many young children the origins of the motor delays are often unknown.

*Eligibility:* Children who exhibit significant impairment in fine or gross motor control. Must be referred by a physician.

*Location:* Children's hospitals, early childhood intervention services, and private practices.

*Speech and Language Therapy.* Speech therapy is for children who have problems with the production of words, such as mispronunciation and stuttering. Language therapy is for children who have difficulty understanding or processing what is said to them (i.e.: receptive language disorders); or have difficulty putting words together, limited vocabulary, or using language in a socially appropriate way (i.e.: expressive language disorder).

Speech and language therapists are state licensed and certified through the American Speech and Hearing Association. They conduct speech and language assessments and develop and implement specific treatment strategies for each child. Speech therapy may be conducted one-to-one, in a small group, or in the child's classroom.

*Location:* Speech therapy is available in facilities for children who have mental retardation or developmental disabilities, Head Start, Help Me Grow, schools, and through private providers.

## **Mental Health Services**

*Description:* Counseling with children and adolescents is quite different from counseling adults. Children and adolescents have different developmental needs and abilities than adults. A child's ability to verbalize his psychological pain or concerns is not fully developed. Adolescents often do not have the psychological benefit of perspective and experience to help with decision-making regarding activities with long-term implications such as alcohol, education, and sex. Children and adolescents seldom have the authority or ability to fully implement therapy recommendations after solutions are identified. Case workers will need to understand that linking a child to even the most accomplished therapist is only a beginning in helping restore a child's emotional well-being. Mental health strategies devised in psychotherapy need to be implemented collaboratively in the child's home and school environment.

*Day Treatment or Partial Hospitalization:* In more serious cases the typical outpatient counseling process is not adequate to meet a child or adolescent's needs. Options such as day-treatment programs may be available. This allows a child to receive mental health interventions and medication monitoring without requiring that he or she be hospitalized or placed in a residential program. Day treatment or partial hospitalization programs typically involve the child attending mental health programming several hours per day and returning to their homes

for the remainder of the day. Programs often have an academic component so that the child can continue attending school while in treatment.

*Psychological Assessment* determines levels of skills and abilities and develops profiles of characteristics for various psychological functions. A psychological assessment often includes intelligence levels, intellectual achievement levels, behavioral tendencies, diagnostic and personality characteristics, and levels of symptomology. Psychological tests are selected and administered on the basis the objectives of the referral source and the problem being addressed.

*Psychiatric Evaluations* are conducted by psychiatrists and determine the psychiatric status of the client. A psychiatrist seeks to identify a physical or medical condition causing psychiatric symptoms. He or she will conduct a psychiatric history and gather data about behavior and physical and emotional functioning in order to diagnose a mental disorder. Psychiatrists may prescribe medications to treat mental disorders. Mental health emergencies requiring hospitalizations are usually managed by psychiatrists. Some mental disorders of childhood are best managed by medication.

*Play Therapy* – is a method of psychological counseling that uses play activities and materials to allow a young child to communicate important psychological information through activities that make it more comfortable for the child to communicate the events or concerns in his or her life. During play, a trained therapist can both learn about a child's emotional life and can introduce therapeutic thoughts and behaviors to assist the child.

*Parent Oriented Therapies* – Most emotional problems young children experience require the parent to be involved in order to be more effective. This is especially true in the younger child. The changes made by the people who have the most control of the child's environment have the best chance of being effective. Counseling with parents about the nature of the mental disorder and the steps that parents can take to prevent potential problems is usually a critical component of therapy for young children. Families function better when parents have an understanding of their child's particular condition. Parents' confidence increases when they develop strategies for managing difficult situations with their children.

*Eligibility:* There are no eligibility requirements.

*Payment:* Medicaid covers mental health treatment, and some private insurance companies cover a portion of payment. Many mental health centers use a "sliding fee scale" for people who do not have insurance coverage.

*Location:* Mental health services are located in each county. Smaller counties often combine with one or more counties to provide mental health services.

## **Early Childhood Intervention Programs**

### *Help Me Grow Program: Birth to Three*

Children ages 0 through 2 years who exhibit signs of developmental delay or at risk of developmental delay are eligible for assessment, and where appropriate, intervention and referral services through the Help Me Grow program. Help Me Grow is a collaborative initiative of the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation, the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. It is administered by the Ohio Department of Health. Help Me Grow is directed in county by the Family and Children Council. Each county has a Help Me Grow contact office that can receive referrals to the program.

- *A Service Coordinator* is assigned to each family to assist them throughout assessment and intervention.
- *An Individualized Family Service Plan* is developed for each eligible family. This plan details the services the child and family will be engaged in. Families are essential components of planning in this program.
- *Developmental evaluations* for children include assessment of Cognitive Development; Communication Development; Social and Emotional development; Adaptive Development and Physical Development including vision, hearing and nutrition screening. The adaptive behavior and social/emotional screening attempt to identify early signs of behavioral and social disturbances and the early prevention activities to foster mental health that can be implemented. This may include consultation with families in the home or developing more specialized services or program.
- *Services provided:* to children with developmental delays and disabilities, or who are at-risk of delay, and their families. The focus of services is to support child development and provide support to families. Services include prenatal and newborn home visits; health screenings; speech, physical, and occupational therapy; and early intervention services including home visits or developmental services provided by the Early Childhood Center and by County Boards of MRDD; and specialized services.

*Developmental Services through Department of Education: Older than 3 years*

Beginning at age 3 years, developmental services are administered by the Department of Education. Each county has a contact office or agency who can take referrals for early intervention services.

- *Assessment:* Children with suspected delays in development are eligible for assessment services. If eligible delays are discovered, early intervention services are available under Department of Education guidelines.
- *Individualized Educational Plans (IEP)* are developed for children with qualifying conditions. This plan delineates the services that will be provided. Schools often provide special-needs preschool programs with classrooms designed to assist children who exhibit delayed development.
- *Special Education Services:* Children with delays across certain developmental domains are eligible for special education services. Cognitive development, communication development, motor development, social behavior, and medical conditions are among the developmental domains that the Department of Education targets for intervention.
- *Specialized preschool programs:* Children with emotional and behavior problems, whose symptoms meet eligibility criteria for specialized education services can benefit from specialized preschool services programming. These include symptoms of common mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression, and behavioral impairments which can significantly impair learning.

Specialized preschool programs are classrooms with a smaller teacher/child ratio. They provide specialized services according to the IEP. A child with a mental disorder would not necessarily be in a class with children with similar problems. He or she would receive services within the classroom setting such as behavior assessment, development of a behavior plan, environmental adaptations, and teaching of prosocial behaviors and skills.

Programs for children with emotional impairments are available, in some form, in every county. However, the specific services and whether they are administered through the local Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disability or the local school system, varies from county to county.