

THERAPEUTIC BEHAVIORAL SERVICES FOR MEDI-CAL ELIGIBLE CHILDREN AND YOUTH

What are Therapeutic Behavioral Services (TBS)?

TBS is a Medi-Cal mental health service. It provides short-term one-to-one assistance to children or youth under age 21 who have behaviors that are too hard for their families or foster placement to handle such as tantrums, assaultive behavior or destruction of property.

TBS can be provided to children at home, in a group home, in the community, during evening and weekends, and at other times and places as needed.

The county mental health plan develops a behavior intervention plan and assigns a trained behavior aide (also known as a shadow mentor or coach) to a child/youth for as many hours per day as needed. The county may also authorize another mental health organization to develop the plan and assign the behavior aide.

Who is eligible for TBS?

Children and youth who are experiencing a stressful transition or life crisis are eligible.

They must also meet the following state criteria:

Child/youth must meet three requirements:

1. Full-scope Medi-Cal beneficiary under age 21
2. Receiving other specialty mental health services
3. Highly likely that, without additional support:
 - Child/youth may need higher level of residential care or acute care.
 - Child/youth may not successfully transition to lower level of care.

Child/youth must also meet A, B, C or D requirement:

- A. Placed in a group home of rate classification level (RCL) 12 or above and/or a treatment facility for mental health needs (but not receiving acute psychiatric care), or
- B. Being considered for placement in a group home facility of RCL 12 or above, or
- C. At least one emergency psychiatric hospitalization related to current presenting disability within the past 24 months, or
- D. Previously received TBS and need it again.

When is TBS Needed?

Most children/youth being considered for TBS get other Medi-Cal mental health services from a psychiatrist, therapist, residential treatment or day treatment program or a county mental health clinic. Other interventions usually have been tried and failed before considering TBS. If a child is not receiving mental health services through Medi-Cal, request an assessment from the county mental health plan. The assessment will tell what services the child needs, including TBS.

What are examples of TBS interventions?

The TBS staff person provides behavior modeling, structure and support, and immediate, frequent, one-to-one behavior interventions which assist the child/youth in engaging in appropriate activities, minimizing impulsivity, and increase social and community competencies by building or reinstating those daily living skills that will assist the child to live successfully in the community. The TBS provider also serves as a positive role model. Examples are:

Behavior/Impulse Control Interventions:

- Reminding child to take a time out when he become distressed
- Helping child develop self-calming skills

- Offering praise and supporting self-recognition when child controls himself

Communication Skills Interventions:

- Helping child identify feelings she wants to communicate with parent
- Role-play communication skills for child and for child and parent

Enhanced Community Functioning:

- Take child on trip to shopping mall, model social interactions with others
- Take child on youth group trip, discuss conflict resolution issues afterwards
- Increase child's motivation to use good personal hygiene through praise and recognition, discussion of aspects of dress, hygiene.

How do you apply for TBS?

If you think there is a child/youth who will benefit from TBS:

1. Talk with the child's mental health provider (such as a psychiatrist, case manager, therapist), or
2. Call the County Social Worker, or
3. Call the child's attorney.

What other mental health services does Medi-Cal provide for children?

Some of the services a child can get from the county mental health department are:

- Individual therapy
- Group therapy
- Family therapy
- Crisis counseling
- Case management
- Special day programs
- Medication for your mental health
- Mental health services to treat alcohol and drug problems that affect mental health.

Counseling and therapy can be provided as often as once per week or more.

What if the child/youth is denied TBS or any other mental health service? What if a request is ignored?

Ask for a written denial notice and ask that the county consult with the state Department of Mental Health about whether the denial is correct. If you think the child does need the service, file a written grievance with the county mental health grievance coordinator and/or appeal the denial by calling the Medi-Cal Fair Hearing Office at 1-800-743-8525. You can file a grievance or appeal even if you did not get a written denial notice or if your request was ignored. If you need help with an appeal call Protection and Advocacy, Inc. (PAI) at: 1-800-776-5746.

Mental Health Ombudsman 1-800-896-4042 for more information.

Advocate Resource library at National CASA <http://www.casenet.org/library/index.htm>