

Mental Health Priority Populations

Priority Population for Adult Mental Health Services

The Department's priority population for adult mental health services consists of adults who have severe and persistent mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, major depression, bipolar disorder, or other severely disabling mental disorders which require crisis resolution or ongoing and long-term support and treatment.

In targeting services to the priority population, the choice of and admission to services is determined jointly by the person seeking service and the provider. Factors used to make these determinations are the level of functioning of the individual, the needs of the individual and the availability of resources.

DSHS funding is directed to provide services that meet the needs of the priority population. Local Authorities that wish to offer services to people other than those in the priority population may do so using non-department funds.

Priority Population - Children and Adolescents

State law requires that DSHS identify its children's priority population and the minimum array of services necessary to address the needs of the children and families in this priority population. The legislation also requires that services be offered first to those most in need and that state dollars be used only for services provided to the children's priority population.

The children's mental health priority population for DSHS is defined as follows:

Children and adolescents ages 3 through 17 years with a diagnosis of mental illness who exhibit serious emotional, behavioral, or mental disorders and who:

1. have a serious functional impairment (GAF of 50 or less currently or in the past year); or
2. are at risk of disruption of a preferred living or child care environment due to psychiatric symptoms; or
3. are enrolled in a school system's special education program because of a serious emotional disturbance.

Children and adolescents do not meet the priority population criteria if they have a single diagnosis of autism, pervasive developmental disorder, mental retardation, or substance abuse.