

## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

## CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P.O. BOX 88

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

November 27, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: REGIONAL EXECUTIVE STAFF, CIRCUIT MANAGERS AND ALL CHILDREN'S DIVISION STAFF

FROM: PAULA NEESE, DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: PRIOR AUTHORIZATION FOR MO HEALTHNET COUNSELING SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

## DISCUSSION:

The Children's Division, in partnership with MO HealthNet (formerly the Division of Medical Services), seeks to improve the quality of psychological services delivered to children in foster care. Effective January 2, 2008, the MO HealthNet Division (MHD) will implement a quality assurance and improvement process for counseling services to children and youth in Children's Division custody, except for those who are placed in residential care and treatment. This process will also be applied to counseling services provided to youth who were formerly in foster care on their eighteenth birthday, but have not reached age 21.

## Background:

Growing evidence suggests that Missouri's foster children are not likely receiving evidence-informed mental health treatments, and may be receiving unfocused treatments not specifically designed to aid in their recovery from trauma and other adversities faced by these children. An ad hoc committee of mental health providers, agency representatives, state administrators, academics and consumers was appointed in February 2007 and charged with providing recommendations on how to improve the quality of psychological services for Missouri's foster children. The Quality Assurance in Psychological Services for Children Advisory Committee submitted its recommendations in October 2007 to the Department of Social Services for consideration.

## Approach:

Recognizing that the authorization ('Prior Authorization') process is one effective tool to shape provider behavior toward best practice, the MO HealthNet Division

(MHD) will work with the Children's Division (CD) to use this tool as part of a coordinated effort to improve the quality of psychological services for children in state custody.

Children in foster care, except for those in residential care and treatment, under ME codes 07, 37, and 38 will be enrolled in Prior Authorization in January, 2008. Announcements to providers will be made via bulletins by MHD. The first bulletin was released in October and may be viewed at the following link: [http://www.dss.mo.gov/mhd/providers/pdf/bulletin30-18\\_2007oct24.pdf](http://www.dss.mo.gov/mhd/providers/pdf/bulletin30-18_2007oct24.pdf). A second bulletin will be released in early December, which will provide instructions to providers who are currently providing services to children and youth in foster care.

Providers will be required to request Prior Authorizations for services delivered to foster children after January 2, 2008. Most services will be authorized over the phone by the Psychology Help Desk based upon provider request and nominal information (e.g. Name, DCN, Diagnosis, Provider Number, service requested). Providers will receive extensive education regarding the documentation requirements while continuing to receive authorizations for appropriate services. Training will be offered to providers in December and this information will be available on the MHD website.

The new process will impact providers but staff and foster parents should experience little change when securing counseling for children and youth in foster care. Foster parents will continue to access care for their foster children in the same way as before, and foster children will continue to receive medically necessary services at current levels. Letters will soon be sent to foster parents and kinship providers to further explain the process to them.

Over time, the MHD will move toward a system of encouraging the use of best practice mental health treatments by reducing the submission of required documentation for providers delivering treatments based on best practices, after the providers have established a baseline of competence in the desired practice. Additionally, MHD and its partners will institute a process whereby the implementation of these changes is carefully studied to assess whether they result in desired changes in services delivered to children in state custody.

**NECESSARY ACTION:**

1. Review this memorandum with all Children's Division Staff.
2. All questions should be cleared through normal supervisory channels.

PN:JCH