



## ***“West Metro Pediatric Behavioral Health Collaborative: Improving Access and Building Bridges”***

***It started with a Concern:*** West-Metro pediatric clinics approached Medica with their concerns about providing coordinated medical and behavioral care for children, adolescents, and their families.

- All About Children
- South Lake Pediatrics
- Partners in Pediatrics

***Reason for Concern:*** Medica and MBH recognize that challenges exist in providing coordinated medical and behavioral care for children, adolescents, and their families.

Possible reasons for the concern include:

- Issues of childhood and adolescence are complicated
- Parenting in a modern society is demanding
- The health care system is fragmented
- Confusion exists about service reimbursement
- Barriers to sharing info – examples of barriers include confidentiality, HIPPA misinterpretation, Psychology State Board philosophy and a “wall” between medical and behavioral health providers

***Response to Concern:*** Medica in partnership with MBH held meetings with the west-metro pediatricians to discuss existing issues and suggested enhancements. It was determined the first step to improving the situation was to open the lines of communication. Medica and MBH have organized collaborative meetings with community caregivers to initiate a response to these challenges to improve patient outcomes.

***How the Collaborative Began:*** Medica and MBH contacted the local behavioral health providers to:

- Inquire as to their interest in collaborative with pediatricians
- Collect information on areas of specialty and interest
- Gather updated contact information

This information was used to create a detailed, searchable referral directory for the pediatric groups.

***Objectives:*** The goals of this collaboration are to:

- Promote development of professional relationships
- Facilitate referral pathways for care
- Facilitate opportunities for consultation and coordinated care
- Improve access to all levels of service
- Promote communication between caregivers
- Inform the community of changes in reimbursement

***Progress to Date:*** In November 2006, Medica set up the first meeting between the selected behavioral health providers and pediatrics groups. The focus of this meeting was networking and promoting face to face discussions between pediatricians and behavioral health providers.

Topics of this first meeting included:

- Goals of the collaborative
- Perceived communication obstacles
- Available tools
- Presentation on integrated care by Dr. Reed Sulik

Since this first event in November of 2006, the group has come together for five more meetings. The focus has continued to be centered around networking and face to face discussions between pediatricians and behavioral health providers.

**January 2007:**

- Dr. Sulik returned to facilitate meeting which included a discussion on HIPPA interpretation and mental health coding.

**May 2007:**

- Medica and MBH offered information on:
  - Guidelines for sharing patient information
  - Follow-up on Coding discussion
  - Screening within the clinic setting

**November 2007:**

- Drs. Allen Kuperman and Sandy Sondell presented on best practices for diagnosis, treatment, and medication management of behavioral health issues.

**May 2008:**

- Sheila Merzer, M.A., L.P. and John Merges, LICSW facilitated the meeting and lead the discussion on Autism Spectrum Disorders. Also presenting were Lori Fildes, Director of Special Services for Wayzata Public Schools and Kristine Flesher, Director of Special Services for Orono Public Schools.

**October 2008:**

- Presentation by Robert Lopno, MS Ed, LP and Maureen Campion, MS, LP on:
  - BH's role in collaborating with MD's, family & schools
  - Assessment issues
  - Resources
  - Action Plan

***Feedback:***

- Meetings have resulted in active dialog between pediatricians and behavioral health providers around communication barriers
- New network connections were formed within the group
- Evaluations have showed interest in continuing meetings
- Continued dialog around best practices for jointly caring for patients

***Outcomes:***

- West Metro Pediatric Behavioral Health Directory
- Escalation Process for routine, urgent, and emergent referrals
- Referral and Feedback Forms
- Open forum for networking
- **Co-location** – Behavioral health providers are seeing patients in standard pediatric clinics to help children and their families in need of behavioral healthcare. Currently in pilot stage at three clinic locations: Partners in Pediatrics, All About Children, and SouthLake Pediatrics.

A therapist is available on-site for patient consultation with pediatricians. They can discuss patient evaluations, medications and referrals to other services as needed.

Access to care is improved by:

- Pediatric and Behavioral Health visits are at one location
- Seeing a therapist at the medical clinic helps to overcome the stigma of behavioral health issues
- Pediatrician can refer to therapist that same day rather than trying to reach by phone, email, etc.
- Whole-patient care comes about when therapist meets children, families along with pediatrician

***Long Term Goals:***

- Open to expanding the West-Side collaborative meetings to include all interested pediatricians and behavioral health providers
- Expand co-location project by adding more therapists per site, adding more clinic locations, and/or adding more hours