



Serving Counties Since 1886

Community Mental Health/Mental Retardation

Pennsylvania's 67 counties are served by 48 county mental health and mental retardation programs, some through a joinder arrangement that includes two or more counties. County MH/MR programs are managed together, with the assistance of an advisory board appointed by the county commissioners. Most counties offer services through a series of contracts with local providers. A number of counties provide some services using county staff.

Mental Retardation: Counties are mandated to provide community mental retardation services to children and adults with mental retardation, as well as their families. This includes early intervention services for children zero to three years of age, and residential and vocational programs designed to help individuals with mental retardation live in and contribute to their communities. Individual and family support services, such as respite care, in-home therapy, transportation and homemaker services are also available.

Pennsylvania's public mental retardation system is in a period of rapid and radical change that is extremely challenging for county programs, as well as the Department of Public Welfare. Because of federal requirements, Pennsylvania is now mandated to contract with counties through an Administrative Entity Agreement and to establish specific policies to be applied consistently in all counties for all services provided for which Medicaid funds are used. This is approximately 80 percent of the total funding.

Mental Health: Community mental health mandated and entitlement services are supervised by the state and administered by county programs.

Counties are required to provide a wide range of community-based services including short-term inpatient, outpatient and partial hospital care, emergency crisis intervention services, counseling, information, family-support services, family-based mental health services, in-home and in-school intensive supports and services for children and adolescents, and several levels of case management.

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In 2007, the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare expanded its Behavioral HealthChoices mandatory managed care program for Medicaid recipients to all counties in Pennsylvania. Many counties have contracted with the state to manage this program, but most rural counties are served by a single state contract with a managed care organization, with support from county programs.

DPW is currently closing the Mayview State Hospital, in Allegheny County. As a result of the closing, several counties will have the opportunity to expand their community-based services.

For more information on community mental health services, contact Michael Chambers at 717-232-7554 x 3120 or mchamber@pacounties.org.