

A Bill of Rights For Children with Mental Health Disorders and their Families

These basic rights should be afforded all children with mental disorders and their families, regardless of socio-economic, gender, cultural, or racial status. These rights apply to families and children with neurodevelopmental, neuropsychiatric, and psychological disorders.

1. Treatment must be family driven and child focused. Families and youth, (when appropriate), must have a primary decision making role in their treatment.
2. Children should receive care in home and community based settings as close to home as possible.
3. Mental health services are an integral part of a child's overall health care. Insurance companies must not discriminate against children with mental illnesses by imposing financial burdens and barriers to treatment, such as differential deductibles, co-pays, annual or lifetime caps, or arbitrary limits on access to medically necessary inpatient and/or outpatient services.
4. Children should receive care from highly qualified professionals who are acting in the best interest of the child and family, with appropriate informed consent.
5. Parents and children are entitled to as much information as possible about the risks and benefits of all treatment options, including anticipated outcomes.
6. Children receiving medications for mental disorders should be monitored appropriately to optimize the benefit and reduce any risks or potential side effects which may be associated with such treatments.
7. Children and their families should have access to a comprehensive continuum of care, based on their needs, including a full range of psychosocial, behavioral, pharmacological, and educational services, regardless of the cost.
8. Children should receive treatment within a coordinated system of care where all agencies (e.g., health, mental health, child welfare, juvenile justice, and schools, etc.) delivering services work together to support recovery and optimize treatment outcome.
9. Children and families are entitled to an increased investment in high quality research on the origin, diagnosis, and treatment of childhood disorders.
10. Children and families need and deserve access to mental health professionals with appropriate training and experience. Primary care professionals providing mental health services must have access to consultation and referral resources from qualified mental health professionals.