

Intensive Day Treatment: A System of Care for Child and Adolescent Improvement

Aateqa Ismail, MD, Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra / Northwell

New York City Children's Center (NYCCC) is a New York State (NYS) facility that provides behavioral health care services to youth with serious emotional disturbances. The three campuses are located in Queens, Kings, and Bronx counties. Programs include inpatient hospitalization, an outpatient clinic, day treatment, intensive case management, crisis management, community respite, and youth and family support.

The intensive day treatment (IDT) program is a structured, 45-day program that serves children and adolescents who are in crisis or temporarily unable to be maintained in a more traditional academic or treatment setting. IDT is a higher level of care than outpatient psychiatrist treatment, even if outpatient treatment includes weekly individual or group therapy, and a step-down level of care from inpatient treatment.

Each child is assigned to an attending child psychiatrist and a therapist. Child and adolescent psychiatry fellows are also present at some sites. A nurse is present at each location for administration of medications, vitals recording, and triage and treatment of physical complaints a child may have. Additionally, each child is enrolled in a New York City (NYC) school program. The classrooms are conducted in a 12:1:1 program, with 12 students, one teacher, and one paraprofessional in each classroom. There are two classrooms, one with children aged 5 to 12 years and the other with children aged 13 to 17 years.

Admission to the program is through a referral process through either an inpatient hospital admission or an outpatient referral. Information is sent to a central intake office and a screening appointment is made with a psychiatrist and a therapist. There are no strict exemptions from the program, but students should be able to participate with no significant cognitive or development disability which would impede treatment. Participants are provided bus transportation through the NYC school system, so parents are not responsible for transportation. Breakfast and lunch is provided through the program.

SCHEDULE OF THE DAY

- 8:30am – 2pm
- Starts with community meeting in which all students and staff members first participate in a mindfulness activity and then have a "check in" on their emotion that morning and goals for the day
- Interspersed with individual and group therapy, meeting with the therapist, and the usual school day classes
- Each week includes at least one or two sessions of physical education, music, art, home economics, and computer class
- Teachers are NYC school teachers



Families on the Move provide peer youth and parent support services

Therapy is structured with a dialectical behavioral model in mind. Groups teach skills and give homework and individual therapy sessions usually focus on solidifying the skill. Additionally, weekly family therapy sessions are held.

Weekly meetings are held to discuss updates on each child. Psychiatrists, therapists, the nurse, and teachers are present.

Discharge level of care is determined for a child based on progress emotionally, socially, and cognitively.



Office of Mental Health

