

NHPF Forum Session
Meeting Announcement

**NATIONAL
HEALTH
POLICY
FORUM**

**Children with Mental Disorders:
Finding Effective Care Within
the Systems That Serve Them**

A DISCUSSION FEATURING:

Jane Knitzer, EdD
Director
National Center for Children
in Poverty

James Kauffman, EdD
Professor Emeritus
Curry School of Education
University of Virginia

Sherry Glied, PhD
Chair
Department of Health Policy
and Management
Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University

**Tuesday,
November 30, 2004**

11:45 am — *Lunch*

12:15–2:00 pm — *Discussion*

Washington Court Hotel
525 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Springwood Room

To register:

Please send your contact information to nhpfmeet@gwu.edu or call 202/872-1392 as soon as possible. Space is limited.

For additional information:

Download NHPF Issue Briefs *Children with Mental Disorders: Making Sense of Their Needs and the Systems That Help Them* (No. 799) and *The Provider System for Children's Mental Health: Workforce Capacity and Effective Treatment* (No. 801) at www.nhpf.org.

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Children with Mental Disorders: Finding Effective Care Within the Systems That Serve Them

About 20 percent of all children have an emotional, mental, or behavioral disorder; about half of them are significantly impaired in their ability to function at school, at home, and in society.¹

Progress in delivering and financing mental health services during the past ten years has occurred. Children's visits to psychiatrists have doubled, more children are publicly insured and have mental health coverage, and public policies are beginning to design community-based systems of care for children with serious emotional disturbance as an alternative to institutionalization.²

Despite these improvements, between 70 and 80 percent of children with mental disorders receive no help.³ Obstacles to care are numerous. The disorders of many children go unidentified or are diagnosed too late. Once identified, these children and their families must contend with service and payment systems—private and public insurance, schools, primary care doctors' offices, community mental health centers—that usually do not offer the complete package of care needed or offer it too late, when serious problems have developed. Families are sometimes forced to relinquish custody of their children to the child welfare and juvenile justice systems solely to access mental health care that they otherwise could not find or afford. These extensive problems compelled the surgeon general in 2000 to label children's mental health needs a national health crisis.

SESSION OVERVIEW

Speakers at this Forum session will describe the various systems set up to serve children with mental disorders, the gaps in these systems, and steps that need to be taken to integrate evidence-based treatments into care. Special focus will be given to the composition of private and public funding streams in children's mental health expenditures, as well as how Medicaid and SCHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program) benefits compare with private coverage. In addition, speakers will discuss the adequacy of the special education system in serving children with mental disorders.

Forum Session Manager

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NHPF is a nonpartisan education and information exchange for federal health policymakers.

Two additional issues exacerbate problems of access to treatment that is effective. Provider shortages have been documented in public hospitals, private practice, community clinics, and public systems of community-based mental health care. And there are serious concerns about the extent to which the care that professionals are currently offering is effective.

A growing body of evidence-based care for children's mental health—practices that have been shown to improve patient outcomes—is being documented. Yet it is widely acknowledged that much of how providers are being trained, how they practice, and what treatments are being reimbursed by public and private insurers does not match the strategies that have been found to work.

KEY QUESTIONS

- What are the major service systems that care for children with mental disorders, and what are the obstacles to receiving care within each system?
- What is the composition of public and private financing for children's mental health care, and what measures can be taken to ensure more adequate financing, both in terms of insurance coverage and direct care?
- What are the challenges to bolstering the supply of psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and other providers who offer mental health care to children?
- What is being learned about evidence-based practices in children's mental health care and the extent to which they differ from current practices? What actions can be taken by government and private insurers to ensure that the care being provided is consistent with what research has shown to be effective?

SPEAKERS

Jane Knitzer, EdD, director of the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), will provide an overview of the nature of children's mental health needs, the various systems set up to help them, and steps that need to be taken to integrate evidence-based treatments into care. Dr. Knitzer is also a clinical professor of population and family health at the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University. Her work on mental health includes the ground-breaking policy reports, *Unclaimed Children: The Failure of Public Responsibility to Children and Adolescents in Need of Mental Health Services* and *At the School House Door: An Examination of Programs and Policies for Children with Behavioral and Emotional Problems*. Dr. Knitzer has been on the faculty at Cornell University, New York University, and Bank Street College of Education.

Sherry Glied, PhD, will discuss public and private funding streams for children's mental health care. Dr. Glied is professor and chair of the Department of Health Policy and Management of Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, and she has written extensively on the economic determinants of children's mental health service utilization. She is a member of the MacArthur Foundation's Network on Mental Health Policy, through which she is co-authoring a volume that examines the well being of people with mental illness over the past 50 years. From 1992 to 1993, she served as a senior economist for health care and labor market policy to the President's Council of Economic Advisers, under former Presidents Bush and Clinton. In the latter part of her term, she was a participant in President Clinton's Health Care Task Force.

James M. Kauffman, EdD, professor emeritus of education at the University of Virginia, will focus specifically on the adequacy of the special education system in serving children with mental disorders. At the University of Virginia, Dr. Kauffman has been chair of the Department of Special Education and Associate Dean for Research. He is currently director of doctoral study in special education. He is a former president of the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders and a former teacher in both general elementary and special education for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Dr. Kauffman has written numerous publications on special education.

ENDNOTES

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*. (Rockville, MD: National Institute of Mental Health, 1999) 123–124; accessed on February 10, 2004 at www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/pdfs/c3.pdf.
2. Sherry Glied and Alison Evans Cuellar, "Trends and Issues in Child and Adolescent Mental Health," *Health Affairs*, 22, no. 5 (September/October 2003): p. 48.
3. Barbara Burns *et al.*, "Children's Mental Health Service Use Across Service Sectors," *Health Affairs*, 14, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 151.