

Maximizing EPSDT: Alameda County Health Care Services Agency's Case Study



Before the expansion of Alameda County's Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) Program, Behavioral Health Care Services (BHCS) provided contracts to community-based organizations to provide outpatient mental health services primarily in office-based settings. In the mid-nineties, BHCS began working with providers to offer limited school-based services delivering alcohol and drug counseling with a limited focus on mental health services.

In 2001, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors and Health Care Services Agency (HCSA) approved the use of \$2 million of Tobacco Master Settlement Funds to invest in the expansion of the EPSDT Program, essentially doubling the County's Children's Mental Health budget. In addition, \$1 million annually was dedicated toward SBHC base funding and expansion and an additional \$1 million was invested in the OUR KIDS Program. EPSDT expansion focused on four areas: school-based behavioral health services, mental health consultation for the 0-5 population, foster care and probation youth. In schools, the EPSDT expansion has led to the provision of school-based behavioral health services being offered in approximately 130 schools throughout the County. This expansion of EPSDT augmented the County's base funding investment in school-based health centers (SBHC) and now, the majority of the SBHC providers in Alameda County also have an EPSDT contract.

The OUR KIDS Program was established as the targeted intervention component (one of six components of the larger Safe Passages Middle School Strategy funded by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation). HCSA employs Clinical Case Managers who partner with an EPSDT provider in 30 elementary and middle schools in Oakland and Hayward. The partnership between EPSDT mental health providers and the OUR KIDS Clinical Case Managers essentially allows providers with the ability to see any youth for any mental health issue regardless of health insurance status or medical necessity eligibility. HCSA in partnership with BHCS and approximately 9 school districts in the County have also started looking at strategic placements of these school-based behavioral health investments. In Oakland through additional philanthropic funding from Atlantic Philanthropies and Kaiser, 10 additional middle and high schools will develop SBHCs (of which 5 middle schools with the OUR KIDS model will expand to become SBHCs) alongside family resource centers and extended learning opportunities for students.

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