

# APPENDIX

## THERAPEUTIC BEHAVIORAL SERVICES (TBS)

The Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) Program is a federally mandated benefit under Medicaid (Called Medi-Cal in California). EPSDT has been a part of Medicaid since its inception. EPSDT provides comprehensive health, vision and dental care and also provides mental health care for eligible persons under 21 years of age with serious emotional disturbances (SED). In July 1999, following the preliminary injunction in the Emily Q. vs. Belshé lawsuit, county Mental Health Plans (MHPs) also became responsible for providing or arranging for Therapeutic Behavioral Services (TBS) as an EPSDT supplemental specialty mental health service.

TBS allows for the provision of intensive one-to-one services for children/youth with SED who are experiencing a stressful transition or life crisis. TBS is not a stand-alone service and may only be provided to support other EPSDT specialty mental health services. TBS may be an effective part of the treatment plan when additional short-term support is needed to prevent placement in a group home of Rate Classification Level (RCL) 12 through 14 or a locked facility for the treatment of mental health needs. TBS may also be provided to enable a transition from any of those levels to a lower level of residential care.

TBS is a short-term, strength-based, behavioral-focused service, which works in collaboration with a child, the child's caregivers and the primary mental health provider to address behaviors that jeopardize the child's current placement. All steps in the TBS process are done in collaboration with the child and, when appropriate, the family team or child's caregivers. The process includes:

- Assessment
- Plan Development
- Implementation
- Transition
- Graduation

TBS begins by looking at a child's behaviors and the risk of high-level placement or need for assistance transitioning to a lower level of care. TBS develops replacement behaviors for the child to use as alternatives to the targeted behaviors. Interventions and strategies focus on improved self-management, self-awareness, and communication skills as well as positive reinforcement of desirable behaviors. Strategies may include the development of a behavioral plan, such as a step-by-step process in which caregivers follow a guideline to manage specific behaviors as they occur and/or an incentive plan where the child is rewarded for choosing positive replacement behaviors.

The client referral process for TBS varies county-to-county. The qualifying eligibility criterion for each child or youth is as follows:

- i. Must have full-scope Medi-Cal and be less than 21 years of age.

- ii. Must meet medical necessity criteria (or have a qualifying mental illness diagnosis and an impairment in an important area of life functioning).
- iii. Must be receiving other EPSDT specialty mental health services.
- iv. Must meet the need criteria:
  - It is highly likely in the clinical judgment of the mental health provider that without the additional short-term support of therapeutic behavioral services that:
  - The child/youth will need to be placed in a higher level of residential care, including acute care because of a change in the child/youth's behaviors or symptoms which jeopardize continued placement in current facility; OR
  - The child/youth needs this additional support to transition to a lower level of residential placement. Although the child/youth may be stable in the current placement, a change in behavior or symptoms are expected and therapeutic behavioral services are needed to stabilize the child in the new environment. The provider must document the basis for the expectation that the behavior or symptoms will change.
- v. Must be a member of a certified class by meeting one of the following criteria:
  - Currently living in a group home facility, RCL 12 or above and/or locked treatment facility which is not an Institution for Mental Diseases (IMD).
  - Has undergone at least one emergency psychiatric hospitalization related to his/her current presenting disability within the past 24 months.
  - Is being considered for placement in a group home facility, RCL 12 or above, and/or a locked treatment facility which is not an IMD.
  - Has previously received TBS services

A child is graduated from TBS once the frequency, duration, and intensity of the targeted behaviors have been reduced, the child has met their targeted goals and interventions and strategies have been successfully transitioned to the child's caregivers. (CIMH, 2005)