

M E N T A L H E A L T H S U M M I T

Invest in Mental Health. Treatment works.

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Position Statement Concerning the Ongoing Administration of the SASS Program

In July 2004, a new Screening, Assessment and Support Services (SASS) program was implemented to provide mental health screening, assessment, planning, crisis intervention, and treatment services for youth without resources who are at risk of psychiatric hospitalization. While the program's objectives are laudable, implementation problems are interfering with realizing the program's goals. Such problems are ultimately hurting children with mental illness and their families. The Mental Health Summit supports the following revisions to the SASS program to guarantee that Illinois' children are being cared for adequately.

Continuity of Care

The program does not ensure that children and adolescents who require care longer than the current 90-day cap on services have access to ongoing care. An infrastructure should be developed to link youth who require prolonged care with adequate services in their communities.

Referral System

There is not an adequate system to ensure that youth who are determined through the screening system not to meet the acuity level required to participate in SASS are linked to local mental health centers. Such a referral system needs to be created.

Redundancy

The current screening process requires family members to give the same information to a variety of agencies when seeking help. The system should be modified so as to not burden parents in this way.

Prompt Reimbursement

The billing system should be modified so agencies that provide services under the SASS program can be reimbursed in a timely manner.

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