



HEALTH SYSTEMS DIVISION

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Date: April 20, 2021

To: Marion and Polk System of Care Executive

From: Chelsea Holcomb
Child and Family Behavioral Health Unit, on behalf of the System of Care Advisory Council State Agencies Standing Committee

Subject: System of Care Barrier – Lack of access to mental health services for youth with commercial insurance, dated 2/8/2021

Thank you for the system barrier that came to the System of Care State Agencies Standing Committee in February.

Response

This is a challenge for many community mental health agencies across the state who want to partner with schools and provide mental health services but are without the funds to pay the clinicians. In some areas school districts put in additional money to help sustain these efforts but most agencies use methods of braiding funding from multiple sources to stand up the program. As funding becomes available to school districts from the Student Success Act new options may be available.

To formulate a response the System of Care State Agencies Standing Committee consulted with Dan Thoma, Senior Manager Behavioral Health at Moda Health (also a member of the SOC Advisory Council) and a behavioral health wide group - the steering committee for Crisis and Transition Service(CATS) – County Mental Health Programs (CMHP) and Commercial Carriers.

Please know that the System of Care partners and OHA support your collaborative work to increase access to mental health care for students. A recent [metanalysis](#) finds that relationships and partnerships should be prioritized among local education and community mental health decision-makers.

Immediate Recommendation

- Provide a space in school for youth to access telehealth services that would be covered by their private insurance.
- Engage in intentional conversations with Marion & Polk county school districts to explore the changing funding that they are receiving.

Longer Term Recommendations

- County Mental Health Programs (CMHP) can already contract with private insurance, this can be explored, along with which specific credentials each will cover. For instance, Moda covers Qualified Mental Health Professionals (QMHP) and PacificSource covers LPC/LMFT/CSW interns/associates.

- Advocacy from local and state levels of the System of Care with commercial insurers could encourage commercial carriers to change policies so that QMHPs and LPC/LMFT/CSW interns/associates become eligible for reimbursement and insurers contract with CMHPs.
- The CATS/CMHP/Commercial Carrier work group could be used to seek solutions, if they are willing to accept the request to explore this.
 - The work group has worked to resolve the problem of coverage for CATS and is currently exploring other potential projects. This issue has been presented to them for consideration and they are reviewing this.
- Workforce development is a long-term issue for Oregon and requires multi-layered work at all levels.
 - HB 2949, which just passed out of committee, focuses resources to develop the workforce.

As your local System of Care Executive groups moves forward you are welcome to reconnect via the barrier process or directly with Nat Jacobs at OHA, Nat.Jacobs@dhsosha.state.or.us.