

What is TiPS?

TiPS is a new Pennsylvania HealthChoices program designed to increase the availability of child psychiatry consultation teams regionally and telephonically to primary care practitioners (PCPs) and other prescribers of psychotropic medications, for children insured by Pennsylvania's Medical Assistance (Medicaid) program. The program provides real-time peer-to-peer resources to PCPs who desire immediate consultative advice for children (up to age 21) with behavioral health concerns.

TiPS provides one team per HealthChoices zone. The program ensures access to quality services in the appropriate setting based on need and mitigates the lack of available child psychiatry resources. TiPS psychiatrists do not prescribe medications.

Why TiPS?

Access to child psychiatry has been a significant problem nationwide for years, as documented in the Surgeon General's report of 2000. Increasing prevalence of child behavioral health issues coupled with a stagnant workforce has only exacerbated the situation. Children's PCPs end up meeting this need even though they may not feel completely prepared to do so.

In response to the issue, Pennsylvania has adopted a psychiatry consultation program based on a University of Massachusetts Medical School program. This model is now being used in more than 30 other states throughout the country.

With help from TiPS teams, pediatricians and family physicians can effectively meet the needs of youth with common mental health conditions such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and mild depression. Of course, some youth need specialty psychiatric care and have medication needs that are not appropriately managed in the primary care setting. TiPS teams can help connect them to appropriate care.

Who are TiPS team members?

TiPS teams consist of child psychiatrists, licensed therapists, care coordinators, and administrative support. They are available to assist any PCP who sees children or adolescents covered by HealthChoices, Pennsylvania's Medical Assistance (Medicaid) program. They also support

behavioral health clinicians working on-site in primary care practices. See the map and list on page 2 for the current TiPS team in your area.

TiPS core services include:

- Telephone and face-to-face consultation.
- Care coordination.
- Training and education.

Consultation

Practices use TiPS most frequently for a provider-to-provider (peer-to-peer) consultation. Phone inquiries are usually patient-specific, but can also be about any general question related to child psychiatry, behavioral health, or community resources.

TiPS team members respond to a request for consultation within 30 minutes, and often immediately. The consultation would usually result in one of the following outcomes, depending on the needs of the child and family:

- An answer to the PCP's question.
- Referral to the team care coordinator to assist the family in accessing local behavioral health services such as therapy, specialty psychiatry, or neuropsychological assessment.
- Referral to the team therapist to provide transitional, face-to-face care or telephonic support to the child and family until the family can access local behavioral health resources.
- Referral to the team or local child psychiatrist for a face-to-face acute psychopharmacological or diagnostic consultation.

Care coordination

TiPS care coordinators are expert at identifying and maintaining up-to-date behavioral health resources in the community. They work with families to identify appropriate options, provide information on the expected wait times, and follow up to ensure connections are made. Care coordinators keep the PCP or other practice informed of the referrals and the outcomes of the follow-up efforts so the referring providers can ensure their patients are receiving the care they need.



Training and education

TiPS teams for each zone are available for training and education based on the needs and desires of the practice. These can be brief “brown bag” lunches on specific topics, roundtable seminars with multiple practices, grand rounds, or case consultations.

Common topics include:

- Education on a particular class of type of psychotropic medication, “black box” warnings, and new prescribing guidelines.
- Implementation and use of screening or assessment tools.
- Specific diagnostic or symptom education on issues such as self-injury, bingeing, or substance use.
- Developing a referral network of community resources.

How to enroll in TiPS

You can contact your TiPS team at the number listed below to enroll. The team you work with is determined by geography; there is a TiPS team in each HealthChoices zone. There is no fee to enroll. TiPS is funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) through the Medicaid managed care organizations (MCOs) and is free for all prescribers of psychotropic medications to use. Supervision of the program is provided by the MCOs that are contracted with DHS for the HealthChoices program.

Once your practice enrolls in TiPS, your regional team will come to your office or provide education by phone to you and your staff. They will explain the program and how to access services, answer your questions, and discuss expectations.

Regional TiPS teams

