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# Community-Based Rehabilitation Services: Availability to Idaho Youth on Medicaid

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Community-based rehabilitation services (CBRS), previously known in Idaho as psychosocial rehabilitation, utilizes credentialed specialists to help Medicaid members develop skills to succeed in their home, employment, school, or social environments. Since the implementation of Idaho's Medicaid managed behavioral health contract with Optum Idaho, CBRS has been significantly reduced and those requesting these services have experienced difficulties obtaining authorization for Idaho's youth. This article will explore the availability of CBRS to assist providers, parents, and others in their pursuit for services.

## Federal and State Law

Federal Medicaid law entitles lower income children and youth to receive comprehensive medical and behavioral screening and treatment services through Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT). Rehabilitative services are mandated EPSDT services when necessary to correct or ameliorate health problems regardless of whether the applicable state plan covers such services, i.e. only if "medically necessary."

The goal of EPSDT is to assure that individual children get the health care they need when they need it. The determination of whether a service is medically necessary for an individual child must be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the particular needs of the child. Medically necessary

treatment may not be denied based on cost alone. EPSDT does not require coverage of treatments, services, or items that are experimental or investigational.

Idaho EPSDT regulations are consistent with the federal standards. However, while Idaho mandates that the attending physician document the need for additional services, federal law only requires that a physician *or other licensed practitioner of the healing arts* recommend services.

## Optum Guidelines

Optum's Level of Care Guidelines (revised July 2017) provides its own definition of medical necessity, which includes an additional requirement that services for children and adolescents meet acceptable national standards of medical practice. In other words, national professional guidelines must recommend the requested service. An argument exists that Optum uses a more restrictive definition of medical necessity than Idaho's definition, which is improper under Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services guidance.

A requirement that treatment for an individual child be entirely dependent upon the existence of a best practice guideline is too narrow in scope and raises conflict with federal EPSDT coverage requirements by placing the focus on the diagnosis rather



## DisAbility Rights Idaho

DisAbility Rights Idaho is one of Idaho's most effective human rights organizations. We are a non-profit, advocacy agency serving people with disabilities in Idaho.

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## EPSDT Guide

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services EPSDT Guides can be found [here](#).

than the particular needs of the individual child. The absence of an evidentiary-based national standard does not equate to experimental treatment.

### Important Considerations

In general, the reason for reducing or denying CBRS is that the service is not "medically necessary" according to Optum's "national standard" requirement, which includes the treatment guidelines of the American Psychiatric Association and the practice parameters of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP). With that said, those requesting CBRS should keep in mind the following:

1. Consider assessing for a Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED). Idaho law defines SED as an emotional or behavioral disorder, or a neuropsychiatric condition which results in a serious disability, and which requires sustained treatment interventions, and causes the child's functioning to be impaired in thought, perception, affect or behavior. A disorder is considered to "result in a serious disability" if it causes substantial impairment of functioning in family, school, or community. The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare has approved multiple SED assessments, including the Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale® and the Preschool and Early Childhood Functional Assessment Scale®.

Importantly, Optum's own Level of Care Guidelines specifically makes CBRS available for children and adolescents with SED. The need for CBRS should be documented in a comprehensive diagnostic assessment and specific skill building support needs addressed.

2. Do not underestimate the role of the treating practitioner. Treatment guidelines and practice parameters are not intended to define the sole standard of care. The ultimate judgment regarding the care of a particular patient should be made by the clinician in light of all circumstances presented. As stated above, the determination of whether a service is medically necessary must be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the particular needs of the child.

3. The terminology can be confusing. The term CBRS most likely will not appear in treatment guidelines or practice guides. Rather, terms such as psychosocial, psychotherapeutic, psychoeducational, or skill building may be used. These terms may have many common features and overlap.

4. Treatment guidelines and practice guides are ever evolving. For example, the AACAP practice parameters become outdated after five years. Over the next few years, the AACAP practice parameters will be phased out and replaced by new clinical updates and practice guidelines. The first AACAP clinical practice guidelines to be developed pending reviews include antipsychotic medication, ADHD, anxiety, disruptive behavior, and substance use.

### Conclusion

CBRS can significantly enhance the quality of life for Idaho's children and adolescents with behavioral health disabilities. A single standard should apply for the availability of these services: the EPSDT standard as set forth in federal and state rules.

*The right care to the right child at the right time in the right setting.*



### Optum Idaho

Optum Level of Care Guidelines can be found [here](#).



### Psychosocial Rehabilitation

For past analysis from DisAbility Rights Idaho related to psychosocial rehabilitation and the Idaho Medicaid managed care contract, [click here](#).