

Scope of the Problem

Nearly 20% of children and adolescents in the United States experience significant mental health disorders. Of these, only one in five are receiving treatment for their condition.¹ This problem is compounded by the well-documented shortage of child and adolescent psychiatrists in Illinois and the nation. The high prevalence of psychiatric disorders, combined with limited access to mental health specialists, creates an environment where primary care providers often diagnose and treat children and adolescents with mental health, behavioral health, and substance use issues.

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General—Executive Summary*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health, 1999.

Accessing Illinois DocAssist

Primary care providers, nurses, nurse practitioners, and other health professionals enrolled with HFS and involved in the care and treatment of children and adolescents up to the age of 21 can consult with a member of our staff.

**Monday through Friday, 9 am to 5 pm (CST),
at 1-866-986-ASST (2778).**

Problem-based consultations are provided for non-emergent situations.

Our staff will complete a phone consultation (usually within one business day), followed by a written consultation summary.

The service is free of charge.

More Resources

Additional resources are available by accessing the Illinois DocAssist web site at:

www.psych.uic.edu/DOCASSIST

Acknowledgements

Illinois DocAssist is a collaborative program between:

- Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS)
- Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health (DHS-DMH)
- Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership
- University of Illinois at Chicago Department of Psychiatry (UIC)

Contact Information

Illinois DocAssist

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child and adolescent
behavioral health questions

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Services

Illinois DocAssist provides assistance to primary care providers, nurses, nurse practitioners, and other health professionals to screen, diagnose and treat the mental health and substance use problems of children and adolescents up to age 21. The service is available to providers who are enrolled in any medical program administered by the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS).

Illinois DocAssist is a free service that provides:

- Problem-based consultations to medical and other health professionals to guide the mental health and substance use assessment of children and adolescents.
- Continuing medical education (CME) credit for training on behavioral health topics designed to assist primary care physicians and other health care practitioners in identifying and treating specific conditions.

- Education via web-based clinical resources and office-based training workshops, including:
 - the use of screening tools and diagnostic aids.
 - stepped-care algorithms to guide clinical decisions, including when to treat and when to refer.
 - ways to improve the integration of mental health and substance use assessment and treatment into the delivery of primary medical care.
- Identification of community resources for children and adolescents who require assistance outside of the primary care setting.

Goals

By providing information and assistance to primary care physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, and other health professionals on the screening, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health and substance use problems of children and adolescents, the goals of the program are to:

- Improve the screening, diagnosis, and prompt initiation of treatment of behavioral health and substance use symptoms and disorders in primary care settings.
- Improve the integration of mental health and substance use care in primary care settings.
- Support the provision of psychotropic pharmacotherapy prescribed by primary care providers for psychiatric disorders.

