



Rady Children's<sup>®</sup>

# Transforming Mental Health

Spring / May 2021

LEADING THE WAY FOR CHILDREN TO LIVE THEIR BEST LIVES

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

## What is Transforming Mental Health?

The Transforming Mental Health (TMH) Initiative works toward effective prevention, early identification, mental health integration and treatment services, policy advocacy, and research to improve the mental health status of children and youth.

*What is the need?* Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Rady Children's Emergency Department saw an exponential increase of over 1,700% in behavioral health visits between FY2011 and FY2019. The pandemic has only exacerbated the demand for youth mental health services, as witnessed by the documented increase in cases of severe depression, suicidal thoughts, and attempts to overdose among our youth.

*How does TMH help meet the need?* Through a generous gift, TMH has been able to increase the access to mental health care for youth. One of the primary features of TMH is **Primary Care Mental Health Integration** (PCMHI). An Integrated Health Therapist (IHT) is embedded in a pediatric primary practice to provide early detection and treatment of mental and behavioral health issues. The care plan is seamlessly coordinated between the embedded therapist and the primary care provider (PCP) through the use of Epic. Please see the spotlight story on page two.

*TMH's mission* encompasses:

- ⌘ Early identification and treatment of mental and behavioral health issues.
- ⌘ Increased access to mental health services.
- ⌘ Provider education through a partnership with The REACH Institute to provide Children's Physicians Medical Group and Children's Primary Care Medical Group providers with up-to-date training in the diagnosis and treatment of mental health conditions they encounter in their clinics every day.
- ⌘ Workforce training in behavioral health, which was provided by National University/Northcentral University in Fiscal Year 2021. The program was completed by over 750 Rady employees.
- ⌘ TMH is also focused on advocacy on policy, as well as with payors, community-based education and research.



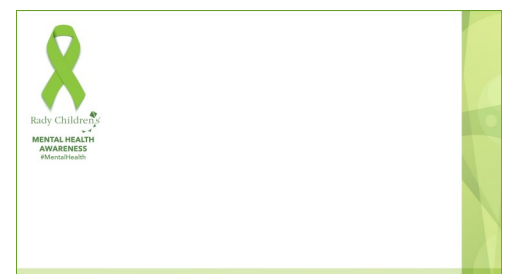
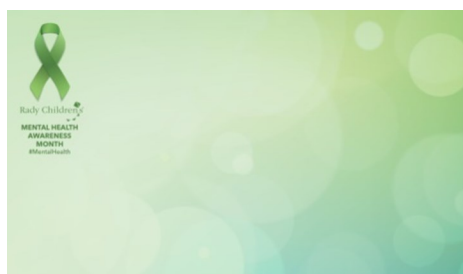
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**MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS**  
#MentalHealth

## May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Increase awareness by using a [Zoom background](#) and [digital signature ribbons](#) that can be found on the Intranet here:

- ⌘ <http://intranet.rchsd.org/documents/2021/04/mental-health-awareness-month-zoom-background.jpg>
- ⌘ <http://intranet.rchsd.org/documents/2021/04/mental-health-awareness-month-ribbon-vertical.png>



# New Program Spotlight: Primary Care—Mental Health Integration

The PCMHI program is a *multi-pronged approach to improve the emotional wellness of youth*. IHTs are embedded into the pediatric primary care office setting to provide a seamless, family-centered collaborative approach to mental and behavioral care. The core feature of the PCMHI model is the warm hand off. This is a quick introduction that is facilitated by the pediatrician between the patient and the IHT. Because the IHT office is located in the PCP’s practice, warm hand offs occur efficiently during a well or sick visit. Subsequent visits with an IHT occur in the PCP office, a familiar and comfortable setting for patients and their families.

The IHT’s scope of practice may include anxiety, depression, school problems, and crises.

Therapy in the PCP office is short-term, typically 4 to 6 sessions in length. If a longer-term treatment plan is warranted, the patient is referred to a Regional Behavioral Health Hub that can provide more long-term treatment. Currently, there are two Regional Behavioral Health Hubs; one in South Bay and another in Encinitas. Two more hubs are planned to be based in Mid-City and Southern Riverside.



Since June 2020:

1,474

Patients Referred

3,525

Completed Appointments

## PCMHI BENEFITS

### Increased:

- ⌘ Access
- ⌘ Early Identification
- ⌘ Collaboration with child psychiatrists
- ⌘ Collaboration with care coordinators
- ⌘ Patient Satisfaction

### Decreased:

- ⌘ Wait times for services
- ⌘ Stigma

## GOALS

- ⌘ Improve timely access to Behavioral and Mental Health services for children and youth
- ⌘ Provide patient- and family-centered, culturally competent care
- ⌘ Conduct early identification and screening
- ⌘ Increase the impact of interventions and treatment plans in the Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH)
- ⌘ Facilitate seamless Behavioral, Mental and Integrated Health services as part of primary care and in collaboration with PCPs
- ⌘ Improve patient health outcomes
- ⌘ Support PCPs in managing Behavioral and Mental Health needs, as well as needs of patients with chronic, complex medical condition
- ⌘ PCP has support of Psychiatrist consultation and care coordination

## LOCATIONS

### IHT SITES

- ⌘ CPCM Center Medical Plaza
- ⌘ CPCM Sanford/Oceanside
- ⌘ Children’s Medical Group
- ⌘ Valle Verde Pediatrics
- ⌘ La Mesa Pediatrics
- ⌘ CPCM Gateway, a partnership with San Diego Center for Children (SDCC)
- ⌘ CPCM El Cajon, a partnership with SDCC

### REGIONAL SUPPORT HUBS

- ⌘ South Bay (Chula Vista)
- ⌘ North County (Encinitas)



## Dr. Bird's Corner



Dr. Anne Bird is the Medical Director of the Primary Care Mental Health Integration Program.



*May is National Mental Health Awareness Month* – a 31 day reminder of the importance of paying attention to our own mental wellness, and the emotional well-being of those around us. The first full week in May is further dedicated to the mental health of our children – 7 days of renewed commitment to improving the overall health and wellness of our Nation's children. But 31 days or 7 days is not enough. In this era of pervasive pandemic stress, and social and political unrest, we need to expand our understanding, re-commit on a constant basis, and bake mental health awareness into our daily lives.

*So, what is mental health?* Mental health is our emotional, psychological and social well-being. It's how we think, feel, act, and how we cope when there are problems. For our children, it's about reaching developmental and emotional milestones and learning healthy social skills. This is often a struggle for some kids. As per the National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI), 1 in 6 youth aged 6-17 years experience a mental health disorder each year. This staggering statistic highlights, not only the importance of accessible evidence-based treatment, but further pins down the importance of awareness and prevention. Just as we teach our kids to manage their physical health on a daily basis,

we too need to encourage them to monitor their mental health, even in the absence of illness. Healthy minds lead to healthy bodies and vice versa.

*How do we promote mental health awareness?* What guidance and tools can we give our kids to arm them for success? As with most things, we need to start with ourselves. We need to recognize, support, promote and prescribe. Recognize struggles within ourselves and our families. Support each other, our colleagues, our friends and our community. Promote awareness by talking about mental health with our kids and practice active, non-judgmental listening. Finally, let's all prescribe our kids and ourselves a daily dose of health and mental wellness. Take your pick: exercise, music, meditation, time with pets, social outreach, art, or a myriad of other options that help refocus the day toward mindfulness and mental wellness. Together, we can ensure our kids get the healthy development and future they deserve to meet their full potential.

*Resources:*

<https://namisandiego.org/>

<https://www.aacap.org>

San Diego crisis hotline: (888) 724-7240

## A Chat with Dr. Bowers Children's Primary Care Medical Group

Children's Primary Care  
Medical Group

*What sparked your interest in mental/behavioral health?* I have always been interested in the long term development of children and adolescents, as well as working with families. Being a part of my patient's life journey is a gift. Several years ago, I had a particular encounter with a family who asked why I wasn't able to assist with their child's behavioral health prescription management. This made me think, "Why not?" As Pediatricians, we are trained in all aspects of our patients' care and that should include behavioral/mental health care as well. That started my journey within CPCMG to harness the knowledge and standardize the processes of our Pediatricians, NPs and PAs.

*What do you mean by "primary care mental health"?* Just like your child's Pediatrician is always there and ready for any question / concern, the IHT is located in the primary care office and will be available for your child when the need arises. Primary Care Mental Health includes the therapist, the care coordinator and the pediatrician working together as a strong bench to help our patients thrive. It is different than "traditional therapy" in that it is built on a

principle of shorter term, more focused therapy. This allows a patient to really address 1 or 2 challenges and then go out "in the world" and apply what they have learned. The patient can come back and check in periodically, as needed.

*What advice do you have for PCPs/Specialists who are apprehensive about treating mental health concerns?* Approximately 20% of children and adolescents will be diagnosed with a behavioral /mental health condition by the age of 18 years old. These patients are already coming to our offices. Just asking questions and opening the door for dialogue improves communication between patients and their clinicians. More importantly, it can really change the direction of the patient's care. Another thing I keep in mind is that it is all right to go slow with behavioral/mental health concerns. Taking a good history, listening to your patient and their family/caregivers, and agreeing towards crafting a path to wellness together is essential. This is the one area of medicine where my families are okay with not having a precise answer after one visit or a "quick fix." Being willing to hear the family and patient's story is very therapeutic.



Dr. Hilary Bowers is the Director of Behavioral and Mental Health at Children's Primary Care Medical Group.

*What do you do for self-care?* I walk regularly, lift weights, look at the ocean, read, and listen to music. My goal is to read at least 52 books this year. I also unplug from all electronics for 24 hours over the weekend.

*What podcast/app/mental health website do you recommend?*

- ⌘ CHADD – children and adults with attention deficit disorder
- ⌘ ADDitude = ADHD experts
- ⌘ AT Parenting Survival Podcast