



A Team Approach for Behavioral Health Care at Pediatrics Northwest

Pediatrics Northwest and HopeSparks, a full-service mental health agency located in Tacoma and serving behavioral health needs in the community for over 130 years, have teamed up to offer mental health care for Pediatrics Northwest patients. We are starting with our James Center and Baker Center offices and will soon offer this service in all four offices.

This team approach will use the Collaborative Care Model (CoCM) which started at the University of Washington. The Collaborative Care Model provides behavioral health care for children and youth ages 4-21, treating common mental health problems such as anxiousness, depression, behavior challenges, and ADHD with a team.

Who is on the Collaborative Care Model Team?

The team includes your child, you, your child's pediatrician, and a HopeSparks Behavioral Health Care Manager (therapist) who works at Pediatrics Northwest. A pediatric psychiatric nurse practitioner serves as an advisor to your pediatrician and the Behavioral Health Care Manager.

Who benefits from Collaborative Care Treatment?

As part of Pediatrics Northwest's commitment to provide whole person care (physical and mental health) we have added questions at each well child visit from age 4 years through young adulthood that help us to understand if a child or young person has a mental health concern that we might not discover without asking. It is not uncommon for an 8-year-old with abdominal pain to have anxiety as the cause of it, or a teen with headache and fatigue to suffer from depression.

We know that the sooner we identify and treat a mental health concern, the better it is for that child and the family.

Before the pandemic there were many children and teens who were depressed and anxious. This has only increased over this past year. That's why we are offering effective treatment right here, right now. Anxiety and depression improve with treatment but if not diagnosed can follow a person into adulthood.

Your pediatrician will review the results of the questionnaires with you at the wellness appointments and may recommend this team-based approach for your child. For some children and youth, we may recommend care by other specialists in the community and will help you to find the right care.

What can you expect in the Collaborative Care Model treatment at Pediatrics Northwest?

Once your pediatrician has your consent for this team approach, they will send a message to the Behavioral Health Care Manager (therapist) who will then contact you to set up a first or initial appointment.

All appointments with the Behavioral Health Care Managers are virtual using Zoom currently. At some point we will offer therapy appointments in person at Pediatrics Northwest as well. Virtual appointments will continue to be available even when in person appointments resume.

The first appointment with the Behavioral Health Care Manager is about an hour long to get to know your child and to make sure that this model is the best fit for your family. For children and teens 16 and under a parent or guardian should be present with the child at the initial appointment.

After the initial appointment, regular weekly or every other week appointments with the same Behavioral Health Care Manager will be set. These appointments will be brief therapy sessions, about 20-30 minutes in length.

Routine appointments, about every 6-8 weeks, will be set with your pediatrician while your child is enrolled in the Collaborative Care Model.

What does treatment look like?

During the appointments, you, your child (depending upon the age), and the Behavioral Health Care Manager will work together to identify problems and meet goals. The BHCM will help your child or you learn new skills and strategies to improve mood, manage worries, and change behavior. The treatments offered are supported by research.

Appointments are more frequent at first and then less often as symptoms improve. If there is a need for a medication it will be prescribed by your child's pediatrician. The BHCM and your pediatrician will communicate regularly whether in person, by phone, or in your child's chart. It is common to make treatment plan changes, such as more frequent therapy sessions or a change in medication. We will carefully monitor progress and make changes if there is no improvement noted in 1-2 months. Most children and youth enrolled in the Collaborative Care Model will not need a medication as part of their treatment.

What about billing for Collaborative Care services?

The Behavioral Health Care Manager will bill for their services once per month based on minutes spent with the patient and in consultation with the team. There are 3 Collaborative Care Codes that are used and there is a maximum number of minutes that can be billed for in a month. Most insurance plans accept and cover these Collaborative Care Codes including Apple Health. These are the Collaborative Care Codes: 99492, 99493, 99494 so that you can talk to your insurer if needed.

Why are we so excited about offering this team-based approach at Pediatrics Northwest with our HopeSparks colleagues?

- 1) **It is effective.** We began seeing patients on this model in March 2020 and many children and teens have already completed therapy and are better.
- 2) **It starts quickly.** Once a family consents to this team-based care, the treatment starts soon after. On average families are hearing from the Behavioral Health Care Manager 2-3 days after your pediatrician contacts the Care Manager.
- 3) **Communication.** The team approach means that there is communication between everyone: the child, family, the Behavioral Health Care Manager, your pediatrician, all working together on a common goal.
- 4) **Keeping track.** We keep track of progress and change treatment plans if needed. We consult with the Pediatric Psychiatric provider on a routine basis.
- 5) **The earlier the better.** We start early in identifying which children have a behavioral health challenge so that we can see who will benefit from having additional 'tools in their toolbox'.

If you would like to know more about the Collaborative Care Model, you can do so by visiting: [Aims.edu.uw](https://aims.edu.uw), and of course, your pediatrician is available to discuss this with you.